

The Sermon on the Mount
Part 15: Building With the End in Mind
May 24th & 25th

Welcome: This weekend, we're wrapping up our series through the Sermon on the Mount, which we started all the way back at the beginning of February...

In His sermon, Jesus is saying to us, *"This is how you were created to live! On your own, you'll never do it. Only when you let me live my life in and through you will you do it!"*

So...what I want to do with these last moments is to answer this question. *"How are we going to live differently in light of what we've heard Jesus say?"*

And I believe that if each of us can identify a next step to take in response to Jesus' words, and we make responsive obedience an active habit in our lives...God will do remarkable things in and through us, for His glory, in the days to come!

So...look with me at Matthew 7:24...

"Anyone who listens to my teaching..." 7:24a

Anyone: Let me just stop there for a moment. In the conclusion of his sermon, Jesus says, **"Anyone...who listens to me..."**

Do you know what the Greek word for anyone means? **Anyone!**

There is a tendency in our minds to restrict Jesus and His message to a certain type of audience! And many of us think... *"There's no way that Jesus could be speaking to me. He must be talking to those whose lives are relatively put together!"* Isn't that true?

Some of us are living in a broken marriage or home that no one knows about but those underneath our roof..

Some of us are walking through...maybe even hiding an addiction that is literally eating us alive...

Many of us have busted up relationships because of busted up decisions that were made years ago...

Some of us are overwhelmed by anxiety because of our circumstances...physical health...financial instability.

For some of us, we have recently walked down a path that has taken us into very dark and destructive places that have stolen the life and joy from us...

And we think, *"Before Jesus would ever have anything to do with me, I've got to first get my life together!"*

And yet Jesus looks at us and says: *Your life might be busted up and everyone knows it...or things might look great on the outside, but you know that you're busted up on the inside!*

Regardless of where you are today...*I'm speaking to you!*

I love that, don't you? I want Jesus' heart to radically shape our heart as a community so that we actually believe that the local church exists for **anyone and everyone**, regardless of their background, lifestyle,

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circumstances, belief system, or understanding of God. So that together, we can gather and encounter Jesus Christ, the living Son of God, and have our lives radically transformed by His goodness and mercy!

Now...let's keep reading! Jesus says...

"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash." 7:24

With this statement, Jesus brings his entire sermon to a conclusion, and He brings each of us to a point of decision. And his question to us is this, *"What are you going to do with me? **What are you going to do with Jesus?**"*

Now...because that is an enormous question to answer, Jesus provides a visual illustration to help us realize the gravity of our decision. He describes two houses that depict two very different ways of responding to Him!

Rock: Some are going to listen to Jesus and decide... *"This man, Jesus Christ, is worthy of my entire life. Everything I am...from my affections, to my decisions, to my commitments and relationships...with all that I am, I stand at His command!"*

Jesus says...they are like a wise person who builds a house and lays their foundation on solid rock. Though the storms of life come and shake that house, it will not fall and be crushed!

Sand: Then, there are some who listen to Jesus and yet His message never reaches their hearts and therefore they walk away without any intention of doing what He says!

While there may be a few of us who are going to hear Jesus and ignore Him completely, there is a greater danger that faces us. And that is that we might listen to Jesus and engage his words on an intellectual level only. That we might say... *"Jesus, that was a great sermon! Incredibly inspiring! I especially liked the part about loving your enemies, because I have a friend who is really struggling with a relationship...and I can finally tell her what to do about it! Or...my husband is so stressed out about finances, and now I can tell him to relax in God's provision. Or, that part about not judging others...that's so good! I have a family member who you are describing to a T...and now I can go and tell them to knock it off!"*

We have a tendency...because our hearts are badly broken to listen to the Sermon on the Mount as a list of holy suggestions, which we pick and choose from at our convenience! Or as a list of ethical teachings intended to help us be a better person!

Jesus is saying... *"Regardless of whether you ignore my message completely...or you treat it like a novelty shop where you occasionally go for self-improvement or assistance to help you get through the difficult seasons...if my words do not become the foundation of your life...you have missed the point!"*

You will be like the foolish man who built a beautiful home, but then ignored the foundation. And when the storms of life came and shook that house, it collapsed in a cloud of dust.

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Now...some of us might be thinking that Jesus is being a bit extreme? *“Does it really matter how consistent we are in obeying Him as long as we try our very best to be a good person and do some of what He says?”*

To which Jesus would say... *“It matters more than you could ever imagine!”*

You see...Jesus is talking about so much more than what we do with His teaching! He’s describing what we build our lives on! He’s pressing into the very foundation on which we find our identity, significance, and purpose!

I tell you this often...because it’s true. Every one of us is building our lives on something! We all look to something and say, *“Because of this, my life matters. Because of this, I can face the storms that come my way...”*

It might be education, success, or financial security...beauty, romance, or acceptance, or the simple pursuit of happiness!

Now...please hear me...Jesus never says that these things don’t matter, does He! **Does work matter?** Yes! **Does family matter?** Absolutely! **Are things like romance and marriage and children deeply significant?** Yes they are! Is there anything wrong with success or acceptance and affirmation from others? Of course not! They can all be very good things. But please hear me! **They make terrible foundations for our lives!**

Jesus says...if you choose to build your life on any foundation other than Him...when the storms of life come, you are going to come apart!

You might be thinking, *“Jed...then why do I know so many people who aren’t building their lives on Jesus, and yet they seem to be doing just fine!”*

Notice that when Jesus described the two men who built two houses, the only difference was their foundation! I don’t know what your house is like...but the foundation of my house is underground...and you usually can’t tell if there is something wrong with the foundation until things begin to go wrong with the house itself!

St. Louis House – When Beth and I moved to St. Louis years ago we spent several months house-hunting. We finally found one that we liked, so we signed a contract on it. And all seemed well, until the day of the inspection! At first, the inspector did his thing...pointing out to us a few ordinary issues that needed addressed. But when we walked into the garage, I could tell he was very concerned, and when I looked down I saw why. In the middle of the garage floor was a sinkhole that the rest of the garage had begun to cave into. Now...here’s how much of a handyman I am. **My first thought was, *‘we can fix this. Give me some rocks and a hammer!’*** But as we began looking more closely, we noticed that the entire foundation was pulling away from the frame of the house. Wall studs and nails were showing...several doors wouldn’t shut properly! It was an enormous problem that the inspector said would cost tens of thousands of dollars to remedy! And unless something drastic was done quickly, that house was going to pull apart, and it would eventually fall down! **Needless to say...we didn’t purchase that house!**

Listen...most of the time you are not going to notice that something is wrong with your foundation until your home begins to fall apart! This is why Jesus says that on the outside, both homes look

very similar. They appear to be stable and strong! It's not until the storms come and beat against the house that one stands strong and the other falls apart!

The same is true in our lives, isn't it? It is in the storms of life that the strength of our foundation is tested!

It's when the doctor sits you down and gives you a prognosis, and you start talking months instead of years...

It's showing up at work only to get called into HR...

It's coming to the realization that your marriage is starting to come apart...

It's when your child begins to make choices that are harmful to them... and you are powerless to do anything about it!

It's when we face rejection and criticism.

When these storms arise and beat against the walls of our lives, if our foundation is not firm and fastened to something greater than ourselves, we will be crushed by things like fear...anxiety...feelings of despair!

Jesus says...if we look to anything other than Him for purpose, significance, meaning...our lives will eventually come apart!

But...if we will build our lives on Him...if you will listen to His teaching and we put it into action...you will stand on a secure foundation that will never let you fall!

Now...please hear me. Jesus isn't calling us to build our lives on a list of impersonal commands. **In John chapter 12...Jesus said to his followers...**

"I don't speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it."

John 12:49

In the book of Colossians...the **Apostle Paul** said about Jesus...

"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation. For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ." Colossians 1:15, 19

All of the New Testament writers agree that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. Therefore His words weren't moral ideals telling us how to live better lives or suggestions about how to know God. Jesus' words are the very words of God Himself.

Through Christ, God says to us... *"I am the Author of life! I created you. I understand how life is supposed to work. Will you listen to me? Will you trust me? Will you respond to my voice and base your entire life on my words, the very expression of God's character and will! If so, I will be your foundation, not only for this life, but for eternity!"*

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How do we know if we are building our foundation on Jesus? I want to finish this series by giving you three ways to know that you are building your life on Jesus Christ! Three ways to continue to build your life on Jesus! As I mention them...look to see whether they are true of your life!

ASK –

At the very beginning of chapter 8...immediately after Jesus finished the sermon and came down the mountain, a man covered in leprosy approached Jesus and knelt before him...

"Lord, the man said, if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean." Matthew 8:2

Here is a leper...completely filthy from head to toe! By every social standard and cleanliness law, He was restricted from joining the rest of the community in worship or celebration. **He knew He was dirty and that He needed to be healed!**

If you've been with us during these fifteen weeks, and you've listened to Jesus speak about what our lives must be like if we're going to be apart of His Kingdom...I assume there has been a point where you've said, *"I could never live this way!"*

"I could never have the purity of heart and mind he demands."

"I could never love my enemies like that. Praying for them when they hurt me...responding in kindness when they strike me."

"I don't have the self-control, patience, or gentleness that Jesus demands! My life is bent by anger and resentment."

"I can't imagine living free of lust!"

"I would love to trust Jesus with my resources and have complete contentment and peace...but I don't!"

"I can't imagine living a radically generous life."

When we place our lives up against Jesus' standard, there's no way we can walk away feeling anything other than unclean!

And until you realize that...you haven't heard Jesus!

But...when you finally see how far you fall short of Jesus' standard...like the leper at the bottom of the mountain, you can approach Jesus, kneel before him, and ask Him, *"Lord, if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean."*

"The Sermon on the Mount produces despair in the heart of the natural man, and that is the very thing Jesus means it to do, because as soon as we reach the point of despair we are willing to come as paupers to Jesus Christ and receive from him."

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Oswald Chambers

Chambers is saying that the moment that you realize how far you are from Jesus is the moment that you are very, very close!

You see...there is only One who has lived this life!

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived in perfect obedience to His Father. He modeled the life of the Kingdom for us...so much so that He gave His life for us...his enemies!

Jesus warned us to prepare for the storm; then He walked into the storm of death and judgment on our behalf. He took the punishment for our sin and faced the wrath of God!

Jesus was crushed to give us life!

"He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed." 1 Peter 2:24

When you see that Jesus went this far for you...and He did it out of love, it will change your heart...

And in that moment...you can confess to Jesus, *"Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."*

And he will do for you exactly what He did for the leper...

Jesus reached out and touched him. I am willing, he said. Be healed. And instantly the leprosy disappeared." Matthew 8:3

The first way to know if you're building the foundation of your life on Jesus Christ is to ask, *"Have I ever confessed my need for Jesus and asked Him to heal me?"*

In Romans 10, the Apostle Paul writes that when we confess our need for Jesus and call on Him to heal us, He does...He saves us! Forgives us...covers us in the perfect record of Christ...He gives us a new heart with new desires...and places His Spirit in us to give us the power to live as He leads!

Have you asked Jesus to heal you?

Listen

Jesus says that anyone who listens to his teaching and follows it is wise!

Listen with your eyes – In our house, when I'm trying to communicate a point to our children and I have this nagging sense that they're not really paying attention, I'll say to them, *"I want you to listen to me."* And one of them will say, 'dad...I am listening.' To which I respond, *"Listen to me with your eyes."*

Are you listening to Jesus often and regularly! Are you setting your eyes on Jesus over and over again...until His words not only touch your mind...but they pierce your heart.

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Speed – My greatest concern when it comes to living this out is not that we won't obey, but that we won't listen...and therefore if we do obey God...we'll obey Him for the wrong reasons! We'll obey God to keep him happy! Or to keep ourselves happy! But our obedience won't stir out of a love for Jesus, and therefore the effect of His word in our lives will be short-lived.

Unless you make a conscious choice to do otherwise, you will have a tendency to run at a pace that will hinder your ability to press into Jesus and listen to Him!

*When was the last time you met Jesus in the Scriptures in such a way that you could hear Him speak?
The house...your phone...the dog...your children...all quiet, and there was margin to hear His voice?*

Psalms -

Our first calling as followers of Jesus is to cultivate a deep affection and intimacy with Jesus...and we do this by creating margin to meet with Him and listen to His Word!

Only then will you do what He says!

Obey

Please hear me! Obedience is not what we do to get into the Kingdom of God! Obedience is evidence that we are walking in the Kingdom!

The clearest sign that Jesus has become the foundation of your life is when you obey Him! Our faith is only as real as the obedience that flows out of it!

As you obey Jesus...moment-by-moment...whether you are on a mountain or facing a storm, He will begin to shape His life in you!

Generosity – Give in radically generous ways!

Marriage – Husbands...loving your wives like Christ.

Honesty and Integrity – At work and home...

Reconciliation – Relational wholeness

Openness – Toward neighbor...

Now...does following Jesus mean that we'll never face storms? No...storms arise, and they bring uncertainty and chaos at times? Jesus never promises a storm-free life...He does promise that when the storms come, we'll stand strong in confidence and peace!

There are few greater ways to proclaim the goodness of Christ than when you stand strong in the face of the storm!

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Close

Harbor...can you imagine if we actually lived this way? If we actually committed to listening to Jesus and doing what He says in our homes...neighborhoods...workplaces?

Can you imagine how contagious this local church would be if we committed to things like love and generosity and giving sacrificial of our lives?

Jesus says...we would be like salt and light in a dark and decaying world!

We would change the world! And many more people would find their way back to God!

Jesus would receive glory! Harbor...this is a high calling! Let's live it out!

Pray!