



January 16, 2022

Sermon Series

Shining Forth: Seeing Jesus in a New Light

This Week's Big Idea

How and on What Do We Build Our Lives?

Introduction: Luke 6: 39-49 ends Luke's version of a more familiar "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew. Luke's is shorter, the sermon is on "the Plain," and his beatitudes differ from Matthew. But there are many similarities, and both use the analogy likening the one who does what Jesus asks, to be the builder of a house on bedrock. Luke's description gets the closest to an actual life situation in that his listeners would know from experience the critical importance of bedrock. Israel has bedrock everywhere, but the soil has a high clay content. Clay turns hard as bronze in the hot summer, but can become like mush in winter's rainy season. Most people built their houses themselves using rocks and mud for mortar - - an arduous task. However, digging down to bedrock could be pure torture if the soil ran deep. Taking a shortcut by building on the hard soil of summer was tempting, but if the winter's rain was great, the mushy soil would cause the house to settle, a wall to buckle and a wholesale collapse of a house. Jesus caps his sermon with this illustration. Lives built on the firm foundation of his teaching will stand in storms. Those who believe in words only will not.

LUKE 6:39-49 NRSV

³⁹He also told them a parable: "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. ⁴¹Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? ⁴²Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye. ⁴³No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; ⁴⁴for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. ⁴⁶Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. ⁴⁸That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house."

Bible Conversation

Jesus paints a humorous picture of a person with a log in their eye trying to remove a speck from their friends'. How do you understand Jesus' point here? Have you experienced it from either end?

Jesus' analogy of a tree's fruit appears many times in his teaching. How do you understand it?

Jesus chooses building a house to illustrate a life that withstands storms. It suggests following Jesus in deed as well as word is more difficult in the short run, but not in the long run. Do you think that's true? Why or why not? What have you found to be true?

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Reflection by Pastor Peter Strommen

Jesus uses lots of word pictures and parables; so we can presume that one or two of them are not meant to stand alone. Life is complicated, and faith has many facets. Jesus may be getting us to think, or describe an aspect of what it means to embrace the kingdom of God. He may prick our conscience or undercut our self-righteousness. His teaching may comfort, challenge, inspire, or open us up to see what God is doing. These images have a way of living in us, sometimes acting like time-release capsules.

His two foundations image speaks to me in a number of ways. Once I understood how difficult building a house was in his time - - rocks, mortar, digging a foundation, lifting, sweating in the summer sun, maybe getting injured - - I could relate to its real honesty. Life is difficult. And building a good foundation may be harder in the short run. That may be why people take shortcuts along the way. But I've seen where these shortcuts lead if no change occurs. When they lead to evil, the results are so predictable. If it is about laziness or having been wounded and trying to cope, it's more sad than anything. But yes, the storms do come and when they do, the things that come from God's presence over a lifetime sustain and allow for new life to rise out of ashes. A second thing I appreciate is the reality of digging in the hard clay. Grace is free, but learning to follow Jesus requires practices and disciplines - - like anything in life worth doing. But what is most striking to me are the generations of folks who have found Jesus' promises to be true. He is the bedrock and his Word that firm foundation. Individuals, families, societies, and nations demonstrate his wisdom - - for good or ill. This is true.

Reflection Conversation

When you reflect on things that were built into the foundation of your life, for what are you most grateful? All of us have learned some things the hard way about what is unreliable, even toxic as a foundation for happiness or whatever. Any discoveries there?

As you think about a person who has been a strong positive influence on you, do any things come to mind about what may have been important for their life foundation? Anything you've sought to emulate?

The 1 Question:

Isaiah also used the analogy of two structures—one that would collapse because it was built on nothing firm—and the other was a promise of God that we Christians believe came in Jesus. That too was pictured as a rock. The false hope was based on the illusion that the Egyptians would rescue Israel from the Assyrians because of a treaty. Isaiah saw clearly this was building a foundation of security on lies. He was correct. I wonder what are the lies we base our nation's future on in today's political infighting. What do you see?

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, you are our bedrock. Your teaching is true. Help us build our lives upon your firm foundation. May we know it's truth so we can distinguish what is false. Secure our footing in untethered times. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Next Week's Bible Theme and Text:

Sermon Series:

Shining Forth: Seeing Jesus in a New Light

Text: Luke 4:14-21

1 week.
1 story.
1 message.

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