

Matthew 7: 15-29 Build Alone On Christ-The Rock of our Salvation Sunday, July 25, 2021, The Eight Sunday After Trinity

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this sermon are several verses of the Gospel lesson for this day taken from Matthew 7.

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

²⁴ “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

²⁶ “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

²⁸ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching for He taught them as one who had authority and not like their experts in the law.

We pray: God be gracious to us and bless Your Word among us. Amen.

My dear friends in Christ Jesus.

It has happened to all of us.

You receive an alarming email or phone call that sounds and looks official. It says that according to their records you owe the tax department or agency of our country so much money. And that you must contact them immediately.

It might even ask you to submit secure information such as your credit card number, driver’s license number and other information. If you give them information you risk losing your identity to thieves who want to access your bank account and credit card. We have all received e-mails from people in places like Nigeria asking to help them with their financial problems.

These are scams. It is so unfortunate in our day that so many people are working so hard to deceive other people, to rob their fellow man of their money by these scams. Also, these scams can cause needless worry, stress and hardship as some people have fallen for, been taken in by these scammers.

Satan never stops trying to scam Christians into thinking they must add something to what Jesus has done to be saved. In our lowest moments of life, Satan will tell us that we can never be good enough for God to love us. In our better moments, the devil will try to convince us that the material things in this life are far more valuable than the blessings we have in Jesus. Yes, the father of lies will even try to make us believe that satisfying ourself with something sinful and contrary to God is OK for a while and it will not hurt. Yes, the devil, that old even foe, will do everything to take us away from Jesus the solid rock of our salvation and convince us it is better to build our life on sinking sand.

Today may God the Holy Spirit guide and bless our study of His Word as we consider the theme, **Build Alone on Christ-The Rock of Our Salvation.**

Watch out for false prophets

Our Lord Jesus ends His famous Sermon on the Mount by warning us against false prophets who can lead us back to the sinking sand of trusting in ourselves for our salvation. **“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”** False prophets never come up to with a badge or t-shirt that says, “False Prophet.” Nor do they present themselves as evil people out to get us and destroy us. False prophets are generally nice people who appear to want the best for you and me. They look and sound like the sheep that follow Jesus and listen to His voice. What they say sounds so good at first, but when we analyze their words carefully against the words of Holy Scripture we discover that they are teaching a way of salvation that is different from what Jesus taught us. Always the false prophet wants to require that we do something to contribute to our salvation. They add to what God has told us in His Word.

One of the marks or signs that we are living in the last times is the many false prophets that go out into the world. In Matthew 24: 5-6 when Jesus spoke of the last days He warned, **"Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name claiming, 'I am the Christ.'"** In these last days we see how many have been deceived by false prophets such as Joseph Smith and Mohammed. These religions have something in common. They claim that Jesus is a prophet, even a great prophet, but they do not accept the death and resurrection of Jesus as the only source of salvation and peace with God.

Jesus tells us more about the danger of being misled by false prophets. He says, **"By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?"** We do not look for grapes on a thorn bush nor do we look for figs from a thistle plant. So, it is with false teachers. We cannot judge them by their sincerity, but we do need to judge them by the words they say or the fruit they produce. If the words are contrary to the Bible then we have every right to say that is a thorn or thistle. That is false teaching. Jesus says, **"By their fruit you will know them."** If a tree bears bad fruit you need to get rid of it and throw it into the fire. The person who teaches God's Word incorrectly needs to be rejected just as you might pull a weed from the garden and throw it into the trash.

An elderly woman once told your pastor how much she liked a certain charismatic television preacher. When the pastor asked how she knew the TV preacher was telling the truth, she said, "I can see the tears in his eyes when he is preaching." Jesus said, **"My sheep listen to my voice, and they follow me."** (John 10:27) We never want to listen to the voice of someone who conflicts with or goes against what Jesus has told us in His Word even if they sound so sincere and convincing and speak with tears in their eyes.

It is scary to think that even some people who use the name of Jesus so sincerely could possibly lead people astray with false teaching. Listen more to what our Savior says about false teaching. **"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven but only he who does the will of my Father in heaven."** Even people who claim to perform miracles in the name of Jesus can be false teachers if what they teach does not line up with God's Word.

God wants us to do His will. God's will and His desire for all people is that they come to know and accept what He has planned from all eternity to save them. God's plan was to take the whole problem of your sin and mine into His hands because He saw that we would totally blow every opportunity to live the perfect life He demands of us. He took our problem and put it into the hands of Jesus His only-begotten Son. God the heavenly Father gave Jesus the job of taking sin upon Himself and becoming sin for us, and then paying for it completely by His death outside the walls of Jerusalem, on Calvary's hill. God's will is that all be saved through His plan of salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. Yes, **"God will have all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."** (1 Timothy 2:4) **"God is not willingly that any should perish but that all come to repentance."** (2 Peter 3:9)

Yes, God's will and God's plan was to have Jesus accomplish everything necessary to save us from sin, death, hell, and Satan. It is not His plan or His will to have me say, "I will trust in Jesus for part of the plan to be rescued, and then do part of it on my own." That is a formula for disaster and eternal death and punishment. Paul wrote these strong words in Galatians, **"If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted let him be eternally condemned."** (Galatians 1:8) To those who do not follow God's will and plan for their lives Jesus says, **"Then I will tell them plainly, 'Depart from me you evildoers.'"**

Listen and build on the words of Jesus

To show that He is the Rock of our salvation, Jesus uses a story about a man who built his house upon the rock and another man who built his house on sand. **“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 the house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.”** When homes are built, they need to be built on a good, strong, sturdy foundation. I have seen pictures and read articles of people who built their homes on the side of a hill and drill holes into the ground until they reach the solid rock. Then the rains can come, and the mud can slide, but the home that is built on the rock survives.

We must have our lives built on the Rock, on Jesus. Romans 3:21 describes a righteousness apart from the law that we have in Jesus that is rock solid and secure. **“But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”** If we build our life on our own righteousness, our own supposed goodness it is like building on sinking sand. If we build our life on Jesus and His righteousness then nothing can separate us from His love. When Judgment Day comes, and it surely will, we can survive the judgment because our life is built on what Christ has done for us, by His holy perfect life, by His innocent suffering and death and by His triumphant resurrection from the dead.

How different is the person who builds his life on sand, who does not build His life on Christ and His salvation. **“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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against the house, and it fell with a great crash.”** The problem with people is that they are born into this world with a natural inclination to think they can build their lives on how well they can do. When it comes to salvation. The mark is set too high. We all fall short of

God's glory. It takes the Holy Spirit to convince us that we need Jesus, if we are to know the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

A pastor remembers some years ago visiting an elderly woman in a nursing home. She has a large picture of Jesus hanging in her room. The pastor that day had a devotion with me and talked to her about the Holy Spirit and His gracious work and read from Romans 8 about the blessings of the Holy Spirit in her life. She confessed how she had a bad day and said something nasty to one of the caregivers who had come to help her. But then even as she spoke these bad words she looked up and saw the picture of Jesus hanging in her room. She felt awful for what she had said. She said it was the Holy Spirit who was telling her that what she did was wrong. Yes, the Holy Spirit does convict us, and the Holy Spirit does help us see that building our lives on ourselves is like building our lives on sinking sand. What a privilege it was for that pastor to remind her that the Holy Spirit not only convicts us of our sin, but also directs our eyes to Jesus as the Rock upon whom our hope of forgiveness, salvation and eternal life is built.

When Jesus finished speaking, the people were amazed at Jesus teaching because He spoke with such authority and conviction. Today Jesus speaks to you and to me with authority and conviction that He alone is the rock upon whom we can build our hope.

Yes, may we now and always join with the hymnwriter who penned these words, "**On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.**" Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.