

Sunday, August 22, 2021

Transferring the Title

(Message 10; Series: *My Heart, Christ's Home*)
(Matthew 7:24-29)

Scripture:

²⁴“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. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But 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. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Message

Let's start by testing your knowledge of classic American literature...

There is a well-known story in American literature similar to the one we just read. In this story, all the characters are builders. They each construct a house. There is a contrast between those who build foolishly and the one who builds wisely. Each house faces a test. If the house was built wisely, it remained standing after the test. If the house was built foolishly, it collapsed.

Anyone recognize this story? (Hint: It involves a trio of small swine; It is the story of the *Three Little Pigs*). (This is a well-read congregation, so I'm not surprised you got it).

Every little pig in the story builds a house. One day the big bad wolf comes to each house, and says, “*Little pig, little pig, let me in.*”

Each little pig answers, “*Not by the—? (“hair on my chinny-chin-chin”).* (I should have wagered with someone that I could get you all say that this morning!) To which the wolf replies, “*Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down.*”

Two of the three pigs build their houses out of junk, maybe because it's easier or cheaper. They never stop to ask: “*Will it stand up to the wolf test?*” It doesn't. One little pig builds his house wisely; the wolf comes and huffs and puffs. But the third little pig's house survives!

There's something about the house building metaphor that runs deep.

When Jesus tells his story about housebuilding you know it has a deeper meaning. It is actually two stories side by side. When Jesus tells parables like this, the best way to understand it is to look at the two stories' similarities, and try to identify the **variable** (i.e., where they differ). When you find the variable, that is the point (teaching) on which the whole story turns. We're just going to walk through these stories together this morning.

(In this story) EACH PERSON BUILDS A HOUSE

This detail is the same; it doesn't vary. It's not optional. To understand this story more fully, we could replace the word "house" with the word "character," "soul," "life" or "heart" because Jesus is talking about building our life, caring for our soul, and committing our heart.

The materials we use to construct our house(s) (life) come from the choices we make. We tend to get distracted because we focus on the **daily circumstances** (events) in our lives.

The truth is, circumstances are finite; at best, they last a lifetime. In the eternal picture, they don't really matter. What really matters is your soul. Our lives throughout eternity. But we're constructing it now, every day, good or bad, intentionally or casually, choice by choice. Every time we choose one thing, we are not choosing other things. But we are building a house – a heart - designed to last forever.

The problem is that we (little piggies) often make **foolish choices**. Anybody here ever made a foolish choice? Even though I said last week, they are seldom very helpful, let's do a mass confession: If you've ever made a foolish choice, I'm going to ask you to raise your hand in a moment.

But first, let me run through some questions to help jog your memory:

- Have you ever made a commitment you wish you hadn't?
- ...ever said something you later regretted?
- ...ever dated someone strictly because of their appearance?
- ...ever made a foolish investment?
- ...ever ignored your father or mother's advice?
- ...ever made a foolish choice with your time, money, behavior, vocation, parenting, friendships, stock investments, or your spiritual life—if so, raise your hand!

Now turn to the person next to you and say, *"I am one foolish little piggy."* (Have you ever said or done something silly just because your interim pastor told you to?)

We're all building a house. The Bible says God's very interested in how we **construct our "home" (lives).**

In **1 Corinthians 3:12-14** (TLB), Paul says, *"There are various kinds of materials that can be used to build on that foundation. Some use gold and silver and jewels; and some build with sticks and hay or even straw! There is going to come a time of testing at Christ's Judgment Day to see what kind of material each builder has used. Every one's work will be put through the fire so that all can see whether or not it keeps its value, and what was really accomplished. Then every worker who has built on the foundation with the right materials, and whose work still stands, will get their pay."*

What a day that's going to be. And it will really happen. Like it or not, you and I are responsible for how we build our house (i.e., our character, soul, heart and life) here and now.

Sometimes people do some really goofy things with their houses: There's a house in San Jose CA called the Winchester Mystery House (www.winchestermysteryhouse.com). It is a fascinating place. **(1st pic)**. It was built by Mrs. Winchester. **(2nd pic)**. Her husband was the Winchester rifle guy; he died; and their only child died; and she turned to the occult.

Mrs. Winchester developed the odd belief that as long as she kept building her house – her mystery house - death would be confused and would not be able to come for her. She'd be safe and wouldn't die.

So she built this enormous house. **(3rd Pic)** Sixteen carpenters worked every day for 38 years to build this house. It contains 2,000 doors, 160 rooms 10,000 windows—more windows than in the Empire State Building.

The front doors cost \$3,000 (In those days you could build an entire house for \$3,000) They were used just one time. The worker who installed them walked through them when he was finished.

You can go up stairs that lead to a ceiling. **(4th Pic)**. Open doors to brick walls. Go round and round on stairways. **(5th Pic)**.

She was still building when death came; death was not confused. **(6th Pic)**. It took eight trucks working seven days a week for six and a half weeks just to haul away all the extra stuff and building supplies that she had compiled there.

No matter what kind of house you build—and there are some great houses around—one day death will find each of us and we'll have to give an accounting of the *house* we've built.

This is a constant. We are all building houses - whether we want to or not. And one day our building will be tested.

EVERY HOUSE FACES A **STORM**

The wolf comes to the door of every little pig's house and huffs and puffs. Not only are we each house builders; each of us is also a storm facer.

Jesus' description of the storms that come are absolutely identical, word for word, because He wants to make it clear, this is not a story about how to build a house where the **storms never come.**

About the houses built on sand, Jesus said, *"The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house..."* **(Matthew 7:25).**

About the house build on a rock, Jesus said, *"The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house..."* **(Matthew 7:27).**

We'd all prefer the opportunity to build storm free, temptation free, problem free, and set-back free lives. Unfortunately, no matter where you live, no matter how you build, no matter what resources you use, storms always come.

Jesus isn't telling the kind of story we'd really like for Him to tell. We'd like him to tell us, if you build like this, you'll never have a to face a storm, grieve loss, get hurt, or feel alone. But this is not a story about how to **avoid** storms; storms **always** come. You will encounter huffing and puffing in your life.

Still some people think: "I'm smart enough...I'm rich enough...I've got enough resources...I can handle any storm that comes..."

Jesus says, *"No, you can't."* Smarts, riches, and resources don't make that much of a difference. Jesus says, *"Don't worry about tomorrow because by tomorrow everything will be sunny."* (No!) Jesus says, *"Don't worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will bring more worries of its own"* **(Matthew 6:34).**
Great!

Today's trouble is enough for today. That is the good news. Jesus' prediction for tomorrow? More troubles. That's the world in which we live.

- An employee with thirty years seniority...downsized. Now out of a job.
- Would be parents who would love to have children battling infertility.
- A parent who contracts cancer and dies...leaving a spouse and young children.
- A world-wide pandemic that suddenly changes everything for everyone.

Storms come into every life. No one is able, bright, or clever enough to engineer a storm free life; if you're not in the midst of a storm or two currently, one is on the way. Check the radar.

But life is not about storm **avoidance**. It's not about trying to make sure the circumstances are always smooth and pleasant. That is impossible. What really matters in Jesus' story is the variable, the hinge point, and that comes down to this, "*What (who) are you **building** your house **on**?*" Let me ask it a different way, like Bob Munger does: "Who owns the deed to your heart?"

A HOUSE'S VIABILITY DEPENDS ON ITS FOUNDATION

You can build your life on the **rock, or you can build your life on the **sand**.**

Jesus says, "*Whoever hears these words of mine and puts them into practice, is like the wise man who builds his house on the rock.*" (**Matthew 7:24**)

Tom Wright, a New Testament scholar, says, "*In Jesus' day the way to God was symbolized by the Temple in Jerusalem.*"

The temple, you may remember, was built on what is called the *Temple Mount* or *Temple Rock*, a rocky outcropping on the east side of the "old city" of Jerusalem. The temple was the *House on the Rock*.

So when Jesus suggests the (real) *house on the rock* is his community of people who build their lives on his teaching ("*who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice*"), some acknowledged he "*taught as one having authority*", and others would begin to push back against this bold, staggering, audacious claim.

But Jesus went even further: "*You've got to build your [whole] life on something or someone. If you do that with these words of mine [i.e., "not just with the Torah or the Midrash but with my words"] you will be like the wise man who built his house on the rock.*"

Jesus is saying, if you listen to me and do what I say about your time, money, values, relationships – i.e., if you invite me into every room in your heart - you will be **wise**.

Then whatever a storm hits, since you've built on the rock, you'll persevere and survive. Build your life on anything or anyone else, and it is like building **foolishly** on sand. Then when the storms come (and they will come) your life—as impressive as it may look—will begin to fall apart.

The obvious question here is, how did the sand builder get in such a **mess?** Why would he build on sand? Everyone knows building on sand is a poor construction practice.

The likely answer is: The builder didn't intentionally set out to build on sand, i.e., to intentionally do something **wrong** or **evil** or sinful. He just took the easier, simpler, less costly, less time-consuming way. Jesus simply describes him as "foolish" (That's the human condition).

When kids do something foolish, parents always ask the same question: Why did you do that? Parents have been asking that question for centuries.

It's a question designed to make sense out of the inexplicable. It is a search for meaning and rationality when it doesn't exist. It's a question. A one word, three letter question: "Why?"

- "Why did you stick that spaghetti noodle up your brother's nose?"
- "Why did you cut one side of your sister's hair off?"
- "Why did you park your bike right behind the rear wheel of the car?"

For an equal number of centuries, kids have always answered the same way: "I don't know." If they knew **why**, they **wouldn't** have done it. If they had thought ahead and planned it, it probably wouldn't have happened.

Why? I don't know. Why? I don't know. Why? I don't know.

If you were to say: "Foolish man. Knowing you only have one life. Knowing a storm is coming. Knowing you are going to die. Why would you build your one and only house (life) on sand? [I don't know. Seemed like a good idea at the time.]

No builder says, "This is sand land. A storm will wash away your house if we build here but let's build it here anyway." No one says that. It just happens. Back to real life—your one and only life:

- No one plans to lead a mediocre life.
- No couple getting married sits down and plans on filing in divorce court...
- No one orders a drink with dinner and says: "I want to be an alcoholic..."
- No one has a child and says: "I'm planning to be so wrapped up in myself and my career that my children won't know me and will resent me as long as they live..."
- No one nurses a grudge, and says "I want to be a bitter, angry, resentful person for the rest of my life..."
- No one sits down and plans to go to hell. It just happens. Why? I don't know!

So Jesus intentionally comes and **knocks on our **door**, on your door.**

Jesus says: Build your house. Build your life on the **rock**. Build it on **Jesus Christ**. Build it on me! Then when the storms come, your house will still stand.

In 2018, Michael, a category four hurricane, devastated the Mexico Beach community in Florida – except for LeBron Lackey's newly built home. **(Pic)** In constructing their home, they decided to go above and beyond the local building codes – a bit more concrete, a few more pilings, a few more metal ties to hold the roof down. In retrospect, he acknowledges the extra effort was worth it. His advice: "If you want it to last, build it above and beyond..."

We've been in this series on "My Heart—Christ's Home." It's about our heart, our life, our eternal destiny.

Bob Munger, after taking Jesus through one messy room after another and getting tired, says: "Lord, is there a possibility you would be willing to manage the whole house and operate it for me just as you did that closet? Could I give you the responsibility of keeping my heart what it ought to be and myself doing what I ought to be doing?"

I could see his face light up as he replied, "I'd love to! This is exactly what I came to do. You can't live out the Christian life in your own strength. That is impossible. I'd love to do it for you, but I'm not the owner of this house. I'm just your guest. I have no authority.

In a flash it all became clear. Excitedly, I proclaimed, "Lord, you have been my guest and I've been trying to play the host. From now on you will be the owner and master of the house." Running as fast as I could to the strong box, I took out the title deed to the house...then rushing back to him, I eagerly signed it over giving the title to him alone for time and eternity. Dropping to my knees, I presented it to him: "Here it is, all that I am and have forever. Now you run the house."

Have you signed the title of your life over to Jesus Christ? Remember, if he holds the title, if we belong to him in body and soul, we will need to **do what he says**.

Building a home (life) where Christ owns the title means we will survive the storms of life...

- Maybe it's a job problem
- Maybe you're wrestling with emotions
- Maybe it's a struggle in your marriage or a divorce you've been through
- Maybe you have a child who's going in the wrong direction, and you wish you could fix it, but you can't.
- Maybe you've lost somebody you love.
- Maybe somebody rejected you and your heart is bleeding.

Storms come. The question is, what (who) did you **build your** house **on**? Who owns the **title** to your life? Don't wait for the storm to come to start building.

A long time ago there was a master carpenter who built great houses.

After decades of working for the same employer, he decided to retire. His boss said, "Okay, but there is one more house I need you to build. It is on a beautiful lot with a magnificent view. It will be their dream house. You need to build it; spare no expense."

He agreed. He needed the money to build a little cottage for his retirement, but his heart really wasn't in it. He resented having to do all the work, so he cut corners. He got sloppy. He substituted particleboard for hard wood. He used plastic where copper pipes were called for. Walls got put up that weren't plumb. He did things that would make Chip and Joanna Gaines sick to their stomach.

When he finally finished, his boss shook his hand and thanked him for the decades of working together and handed him an envelope. When he opened it, he found, to his shock, that it contained the title and key to the house he had just completed.

He didn't know the house he had been building with such resentment and dishonesty was the place he would be spending the rest of his years.

Day after day you and I have the opportunity to build something amazing.

Don't miss out on the **opportunity of life**; spare no expense; don't make the same mistake.

Turn your **title** of your heart and life over to Jesus Christ today.

Prayer: Into my heart



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