

**SANDCASTLES: Fun in the Sun**  
**Message for July 15, 2018**  
**North East United Methodist Church**  
**Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

Scripture - Matthew 7: 21-27 (NKJV) -

*“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ 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: 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. 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: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”*

**PRAYER**

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Matthew 5: 1 (NKJV) - ***“And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying...”***

Jesus walks up on a hillside near Capernaum, near the Sea of Galilee...



...and He delivers His most powerful sermon...probably over the course of several days...teaching the Lord’s Prayer and the Beatitudes...proclaiming that position, authority, and money are not important in His kingdom...that what matters is faithful obedience from the heart...Jesus challenges the proud and legalistic religious leaders of the day, calling them back to the message of the Old Testament prophets, who, like Jesus, taught that heartfelt obedience is more important than legalistic observance...

The last verse of Chapter 5 could perhaps be a summary statement of Jesus’ message on that hillside near Capernaum...

Matthew 5:48 (NKJV) – ***“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”***

Jesus explains that there are two ways – there is the narrow gate, the narrow path, that leads to life – and there is the wide and spacious road that many will take that leads to destruction...

There are two ways to build our lives...We can build on the rock or we can build on the sand...

In Palestine, many would build their homes during the dry season. When the fall rains came, earth and homes were sometimes washed away.



Jesus wants us to understand that both builders get along well in the dry season, but only one built with the coming rains in mind. Have we prepared? Have we built on a strong foundation?

What are the rains that will come...the rains Jesus refers to?

Jesus is referring to the final judgment. Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with the following description of that moment...when Christ will return...Matthew 7: 21-23 (NKJV) - ***“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”***

In that day, when Christ returns, we will stand before Him...and many will be washed away for they will have built their lives upon sand...Jesus will declare to them, *“I never knew you; depart from me...”*

Jesus is saying...



So how can one build their house on rock...How do we do this? Jesus answers that question in Matthew 7: 24 (NKJV) - ***“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...”***

The Message translation puts it this way – Matthew 7: 24-27 (The Message) – ***“These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock. But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards.”***

Jesus says if one hears His words and does them, lives them, that person is like a man who built his house on the rock and when the rains came...when the day comes and Christ returns...he will withstand the rains...his foundation will pass inspection – and he will be welcomed into the kingdom...

What words does Jesus speak of?

Remember, the parable of the house built on rock and sand comes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount...the crowds have sat for days, perhaps, listening to Jesus' teachings...and now at the end of this discourse Jesus states, ***“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...”***

What words does Jesus speak of? Jesus is talking about the words He has just shared in the Sermon on the Mount, beginning with the Beatitudes...

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about the heart...

Jesus challenges us to look at our hearts. Jesus explains throughout His Sermon on the Mount that a true follower, by acting on His words, is like a person who builds their house on solid rock. The one who builds on rock is a hearing, responding disciple, not superficial. The one who builds on sand is one whose heart is truly centered on Christ and is puts Jesus' teachings into practice out of love for Him...His or her obedience flows out of a heart centered on God...

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addresses this...He makes it clear that on judgment day, Jesus will expose those who sound religious and who do religious deeds, but who have no personal relationship with Him...No heart change...

Remember Dr. Seuss' The Grinch...his heart too small...



and then...atop the mountain...hearing the Whos down in Whoville sing and praise...his heart grew several sizes...



There was a heart change...And because of this heart change...The Grinch acted...returning the many gifts he had stolen from the Whos down in Whoville...

Jesus challenges us to look at our hearts...

Matthew 5: 21-22 (The Message) - ***“You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother 'idiot!' and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell 'stupid!' at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill.”***

Matthew 5: 27-28 (NIV) – ***“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”***

F. LaGard Smith writes, *“Jesus is not even saying, ‘Be moral.’ If His teaching stopped there, the Christian walk would be easy enough to accept. After all, few of us have ever murdered anyone. But Jesus takes us behind the rule and within the heart of the law to its very essence. It is not enough not to kill; we must not even hate. It is not enough to not commit adultery; we must not ever wish we could. It is not enough to love the loveable; we must also love those who are unlovable, even those who we might consider to be enemies.”*

Jesus is looking at the heart, not outward appearance...

And His teaching gets even tougher...

Jesus declares...

Turn the other cheek...Matthew 5:38-39 (NLT) – ***“You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also.”***

Give to all who beg...Matthew 5:42 (NLT) – ***“Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.”***

Love your enemies...Matthew 5:43-44 (NLT) - ***“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!”***

How can we do these things? How can we be obedient?

Only with a change of heart...only with a heart focused on and filled with God...

Even when we pray, Jesus reminds us that it is not about the outward appearance...it is about how we pray in private...when it is just us and God...it is about our hearts communing with and loving God...it is about a relationship, a personal relationship, that we spend time nurturing and nourishing...

Pray...Matthew 6:5-6 (NLT) - ***“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”***

Jesus says, “I see not your works...I see your heart...,” challenging us to ***“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”***

John Wesley, preaching on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, proclaimed,



*“...the one who builds his house upon a rock is he “who does the will of my Father in heaven.” He sees and feels all his sin and all his guilt — till it is washed away by the atoning blood. He is conscious of his lost estate, of the wrath of God abiding on him, and of his utter inability to help himself — till he is filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost...His soul is athirst for nothing on earth, but only for God, the living God. He loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all*

*his mind, and soul, and strength...How truly wise is this man! He sees, clearer than the light of the noonday sun, that the end of man is to glorify God and to love and enjoy him for ever. And with equal clearness he sees the means to that end — which is to know, love, and imitate God, and to believe in Jesus Christ who he has sent...This wise man “builds his house upon a rock,” upon the Rock of Ages: the Lord Jesus Christ. He builds only upon Jesus’ blood and righteousness. On this cornerstone he fixes his faith, and rests the whole weight of his soul upon it...He is taught of God to say, “Lord, I have sinned; I deserve the nethermost hell — but I am justified freely by thy grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ — and the life I now live, I live by faith in Him, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I now live — even in the flesh — a life of love, a life of holiness and happiness, praising God and doing all to his glory.”*

John Wesley is saying that the wise man or woman comes to understand that there is nothing they can do to make God love them any more and there is nothing they can do to make God love them any less...That their salvation is not based on anything they have done or will do...Their salvation is based on who God is...The forgiveness of their sins, the cleansing of their Spirit, redemption...is made possible by Christ’s sacrifice, by God’s mercy, by the Amazing Grace offered to us...

The wise man recognizes that without Christ, without God’s mercy, they are lost. As Wesley’s contemporary, George Whitefield said, *“What! Get to heaven on your own strength? Why, you might as well try to climb to the moon on a rope of sand!”*

As C.H. Spurgeon wrote, recognizing that on his own merit he could never enter the gates of heaven, *“If heaven were by merit, it would never be heaven to me, for if I were in it I should say, ‘I am sure I am here by mistake; I am sure this is not my place; I have no claim to it.’ But if it be of grace and not of works, then we may walk into heaven with boldness.”*

Spurgeon recognizes he could not walk into heaven on his own merits but because of God’s invitation, because of God’s hospitality, because the Master has told His servant, *“Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full,”* we can enter God’s presence...

Colossians 2:14 (NLT) – ***“He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.”***

I John 3:1 (NIV) – ***“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”***

John Wesley wrote in his journal on May 24, 1738, *“In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while the leader was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”*

Wesley, that night in 1738, recognized...truly realized...not only the depth of his sin...that which no matter how hard he tried he could not erase...but that night, Wesley realized the depth of God's grace...

Once one understands...really understands...grasps their own sinful state and God's amazing gift of grace and adoption...it is then and only then that one's heart is "*strangely warmed*," that one undergoes a heart change...

Jesus understood that there would be many in the church...many Christians who declare "*Lord, Lord...*"...who will not experience this heart change...

Jesus knew that there would be many who will build their house on the sand...attempting to achieve on their own strength that which only God could do...



Thus, many will fail to be obedient...many will hold grudges...many will refuse to love the unlovable...many will seek their own rewards... many will give expecting return...many will be doing right by outward appearances, may have the respect of their brothers and sisters, but their heart will be in the wrong place...

Many of God's children will simply fail to realize the gift that is presented them...they will operate under the absurd thought that they can earn their way, that on their own strength they can live a Godly life, and on their own strength they will fall into selfishness, pride, and worldly desires...failing to love as God has loved them, to forgive as they have been forgiven...

*"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..."*

Jesus understood that many would build their house on the sand...their own merits and strengths, the world and its acceptance...they would not know God so deeply that their hearts were forever changed by the knowledge of what God had done to save them...they would not have experienced a heart change that would now result in a life of holiness and service, a life of love and praise, a life such as Jesus speaks of in the Sermon on the Mount...They would not have the strength, the passion, the drive to live out God's commands...The world would too easily break in...the rains would too easily wash away one's convictions, one's faith, one's commitment...

Building our house on the rock begins with a heart change...declaring as Wesley wrote, "*...I have sinned; I deserve the nethermost hell — but I am justified freely by thy grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ — and the life I now live, I live by faith in Him, who loved me,*



*and gave himself for me. I now live — even in the flesh — a life of love, a life of holiness and happiness, praising God and doing all to his glory.”*

Understanding this is the foundation...It is in this knowledge we gain our strength...This is the foundation that we can build our lives upon...the foundation that pushes us to no longer commit murder with our words, no longer lust in our hearts, no longer call for an “*eye for an eye*,” no longer pass by the beggar on the street, no longer hate those who persecute us, no longer fail to “*seek first the kingdom of God*”...

When Jesus checks your heart...will Jesus find one who has struggled, fought, strived to live a life of obedience...lived not out of obligation or fear or show, but lived out of love and gratitude...Will Jesus find that you, like the foolish man, built your house on the sand or will Jesus find that you, like the wise man, strived to build your house on the Rock...that the Cornerstone has been laid in the recesses of your heart and has affected the entire structure, every nook and cranny...a structure, that because of Christ, no flood can destroy...