

- ***READ Matthew 7:24-27*** As Jesus concludes His famous mountain message to the great multitude gathered before Him as recorded in **Matthew 5-7**, we see our Lord leaving the people with a closing thought of great importance. He has just spent a great amount of time and effort to share with these many people the message of the kingdom of God and what God expects of those who desire to seek after Him. Jesus speaks about their character. He speaks about their behavior. He speaks about prayer, the heart, and the way we view others. He speaks of the goodness of God and the choices we have to make in this life. He speaks about false teachers and the coming judgement. And after all of this has been said and done...after all of this has been spoken into the ears of those gathered...Jesus basically challenges them concerning what they are going to do with it.
- What we see next from Jesus is the well known parable that we have read about, sung about, or even taught to our children or other people. It is the parable of the wise and the foolish man and these two men represent the two different responses that the people of this multitude will have in regard to what Jesus has just shared with them. There are few lessons and take away points that I want for us to take just a moment to consider.

Lessons From The Parable:

- Those who listen to Jesus's words will be strong.
 - Jesus says that the wise man built his house upon a firm and solid foundation that allowed for his house to be able to withstand the brutal storm that thrashed against it. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew strongly against the house, but it did not fall for its foundation allowed for it to stand firm.
 - While we are not building literal houses, you have heard me say many times that each of us are building spiritual houses of faith. What Jesus's parable is teaching us is that if we will listen to his words and live them out then we will be able to stand firm against the storms that will seek to thrash us about in this life. Temptation, sin and the difficulties of life will give their best effort to cause our houses to fall, and yet they will stand because they are built on the solid foundation of Jesus's words and truth. Jesus calls the man in the parable wise, and we can infer that we too would be wise to build our spiritual houses on the firm foundation of Jesus.
- Those who don't listen to Jesus's words will be weak.
 - The wise man built his house on the rock, but we know that there was also a foolish man who did not do such. Instead this man built his house on the shaky foundation of the sand, and when the rain, floods, and winds came...well that house didn't stand a chance of standing firm. It fell, and Jesus adds a bit of emphasis by stating that its fall was great.
 - So Jesus says it would be for those who hear Jesus's words and refuse to act upon them. They would be like those who neglect to build their spiritual house with a firm foundation, and when the difficulties of life come at them...when they are faced with temptation, sin, and trial...well they are defeated and destroyed and great would be that defeat. The choice seems pretty clear to me. I want to be the wise man, and I hope you do, as well.

We have all probably heard something similar alongs these lines for much of our lives. We have been taught or have seen the contrast between the wise and foolish man brought to life, but I want to share a third point that I had never considered before that I heard a fellow preacher share it this past week.

Jordan Shouse, a friend to this congregation, recently presented a lesson from this same text and he mentioned something that I had never considered before. He made mention that these men had both done their building prior to these storms actually arriving.

- The building begins before the storms arrive.
 - It wasn't as if these men were caught in the storms and then decided to begin building in the middle of it, but both of them had begun this process far before the storms surrounded them. They were able to build these houses during a time of peace, and not as the storms came down.
 - Each man had made the conscience decision do what they did. Each of them seemed to have had accessibility to the same building materials, and yet they each went about the building process differently. Each went about building brick by brick, and yet the results couldn't have been any more different.

Jordan phrased it a bit differently, but the idea of building with bricks took my mind back to something familiar. I know that me using the phrase "brick by brick" has probably opened up some wounds in my fellow Volunteer faithful who remember former coach Butch Joes building his sham of a program around the idea of doing it brick by brick. I know it hurts to even say the words and it hurts even more to think about...I myself have the t-shirt and will forever have it on a t-shirt blanket that Katie made for me, but if we can remove our orange-tinted glasses for just a second then we will quickly realize that the idea and concept itself really wasn't a bad one. Instead it was simply very poorly executed. These thoughts almost immediately entered my mind when Jordan started introducing the idea of building with bricks.

- That was the main point of Jordan's lesson from this parable. What Jesus had just done was supply these great many people with a truck load of bricks and now they had the opportunity to do something with them. They could either use those bricks to build on the truth of Jesus and the kingdom or they could choose not to do so, and the same choices are before us today. Let's finish by making three quick observations concerning the bricks that we have been given with which to build our spiritual houses of faith.

I. We are constantly being given bricks with which to build our houses of faith.

A. What exactly are these bricks we are speaking of?

1. The bricks I am referring to would be any of the time, energy, and effort that we put into focusing our minds on spiritual things. So I would say that each of us have been provided with some spiritual bricks by being in attendance today during our Bible class and assembly times.
2. I would suggest that we are given bricks with which to build anytime we spend time in God's Word through study or even in going through our Daily Bible reading schedule. Any time we are able to give attention to the things of God, we are being supplied with bricks that can be used to build a strong spiritual house of faith.

B. Additionally, we should make note that the amount of bricks we are in possession of will be determined by how much time we give to the things of God.

1. If we only show up for the Sunday morning assembly, then we cannot expect to be found with as many bricks as the person who is present for Bible study, the Sunday morning and Sunday night assembly, and our mid-week Bible study. If we only crack open our Bible during Bible class then we cannot expect to have as many bricks as the person who is reading their Bible daily. If our only consideration of God is the same quick prayer before every meal then we cannot expect to have the same amount of bricks as the person who is constantly giving themselves over to prayer all throughout the day.
2. We cannot expect to have a heaping pile of bricks with which to work with if we are never putting in the time and effort to accumulate them by giving God a great deal of consideration within our day to day thoughts and actions. We ought to be constantly gaining bricks with which to work with, but it all depends on the amount of attention we are giving to the things that pertain to God and His Word.

II. The strength of our houses will be determined by what we do with the bricks given to us.

- A. Let's note that just because we are constantly present or giving attention to God doesn't mean the work is done...we must do something with the bricks that have been given to us through our efforts and time given to the things of God.
1. Jesus says, *"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mind and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock."* (Matthew 7:24) It wasn't enough for these people to simply hear the words of Jesus, but they needed to do something with those words. They had to digest them and then do something with them.
 2. We need to be a people who are constantly meditating upon God's Word. I think about the words that God shared with Joshua concerning how he should handle God's Word. In Joshua 1:8, the Lord said, *"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."* The success doesn't come from just hearing the Word, but it comes from hearing, meditating and acting upon what has been given to us. We must use these bricks to build something!
 3. James really says it well in James 1:21-25 when he speaks about allowing the word to be *"implanted"* within ourselves to the salvation of our souls. We must not be merely hearers of the word, but we must be doers. It is only in doing this that we can build a strong spiritual house that will be able to withstand the coming storms.
- B. However, if we simply have a growing pile of bricks with nothing being done with them...what good is that? How will that help us any?
1. If we are simply here taking up space for whatever reason, then we aren't truly doing anything good for ourselves. James would say we are *"like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was."* (James 1:23,24)
 2. What is the meaning of what James has said? I believe his point is to compare the person who hears and fails to do with the person who looks in the mirror and sees what he looks like, but then is not able to turn around and describe what he has just seen because he has already forgotten. Well we would say that this person seems awful foolish to not be able to commit to memory such a thing as his own face, but that is exactly James's point. The person who hears God's Word and isn't willing to act upon them is a foolish man, and he is only setting himself up for failure in this life.

III. If we fail to build strong houses of faith with our bricks, then our houses will eventually fall.

- A. Remember, these men built their houses before the storms came, and we must build our spiritual houses now before the storms come.
1. If we use our bricks well and build strong spiritual houses for ourselves then we should be able to withstand the temptation, sin, and trials that will eventually find their way into our lives. We build to please God and to withstand the difficulties of this life. However, our failure to use the bricks that have been given to us to strengthen our faiths and become stronger will only result in our spiritual ruin.
 2. Can I take us back real quick to the failures of Butch Jones. If ever we could have a perfect analogy for what we're discussing with this lesson it would be him. He preached and preached brick by brick. He even accumulated some pretty fantastic bricks in some pretty outstanding football players like Joshua Dobbs, Alvin Kamara, Derek Barnett, Kahlil McKenzie among others, and yet he didn't use those bricks to actually build anything worthwhile which is why he was eventually fired from his position as the football coach at the University of Tennessee.

B. Maybe the greatest example of the failure to use the bricks given would be that of Judas Iscariot.

1. Judas, a chosen handpicked Apostle of Jesus, was given every opportunity to build a strong spiritual house by spending around three years with Jesus as He went about in His ministry. Judas was here with the multitudes here in **Matthew 5-7**. He was with Jesus during His teachings on discipleship and putting God first above all things. He was with Jesus while He spoke about the dangers of the devil and the need to overcome his attacks.
2. Judas was given so many bricks with which to build his spiritual house, yet the house he built was not able to stand against the attacks of Satan once he came knocking on his door. His greed destroyed any sort of spirituality he might have possessed, and it led to him betraying the Son of God into the hands of godless men. Judas had the opportunity, but he did nothing productive with it and he was spiritually destroyed in the process.

What about us? Which man will we be like when it comes to our response to the teachings of Jesus and the time we give to spiritual things. If we will commit to a steady diet of things concerning God then we will find ourselves having all of the bricks we need in order to build strong houses of faith that will withstand the storms of this life. However, if we neglect the things of God or fail to use the bricks that we have been given then we will surely fall and great will be our fall. May God help us to be like the wise man and act upon the words of Jesus that we hear from day to day.

PRAYER *Our Father in heaven...it is in the name of Jesus that we approach you and request that you would help for us to be more committed to the things that concern Your Son and Your will for us in this life. We recognize that through this church and Your word we are constantly given opportunities to be built up in our faiths so that we might be able to withstand Satan and the difficulties of this life. May our growth and success be attributed to Your strength and guidance. May we be built up stronger day by day, even as we go about our day to day lives this week. Thank you for everything You have done, everything You are doing, and everything You will continue to do for us, especially for the giving of Your Son and the strength we find in Him. It is by His authority we pray these things...amen.*