

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Matthew 7:15-29 – June 22, 2014

Sermon by Pastor Roger Zehms
Faith Lutheran Church
Radcliff, Kentucky

¹⁵“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. ²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ ²³Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ 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, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Last Sunday our Gospel lesson and sermon text focused on the familiar words of Jesus, **“Go and make disciples of all nations.”** We take seriously Jesus’ methods of **“baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”** and **“teaching them to obey everything I (Jesus) have commanded you.”** In the past six months we have focused our attention on what the Lord God has done for us in his Son Jesus Christ to make all of this possible. Now, for the next twenty Sundays, we will see how the Lord blesses us so that we respond in a God-pleasing way.

This morning, on the basis of Jesus’ final words from his Sermon on the Mount, we look to that Savior so that we might respond in a God-pleasing way. He speaks to us and he says

BUILD ON THE ROCK!

WE BUILD ON THE ROCK WHEN WE DO THE WILL OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER (vv. 21-23).

OUTWARD PERFORMANCE IS NOT SUFFICIENT.

There are many examples of outstanding outward signs of obedience to God’s will. Many are interested in worship but listen to Jesus: **²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.”** Did you ever notice how many civic organizations and political groups feel they must have a prayer of some kind to begin their meetings? In such organizations and groups there are many who go along with the crowd and say the right words and even do the right things but do not have faith in their hearts. It is not our place to judge – that God will do on the Last Day. Many were teaching in the church of Jesus’ day: **“Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?”** These were people within the visible church. These were people who were doing miracles in the sight of the world. Underneath, however, they personally had no real faith relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Outward performance must be judged by the Word of God. Listen to God in Deuteronomy 13:1-3: **“If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, ‘Let us follow other gods’ (gods you have not known) ‘and let us worship them,’ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.”** Regardless of how great a miracle appears, this does not tell us if the person is a true prophet of God. The Word of God must always decide the matter. Good things done – inside or outside of the church – can never violate the Word of our God.

OUTWARD PERFORMANCE MUST BE MOTIVATED BY FAITH.

This is the **“will of my (the) Father.”** These verses are part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. They cover some three chapters of Matthew’s Gospel. The words are part of an actual sermon of Jesus, not a compilation of his teachings. It is God’s will that people repent of their sins and come to faith in Jesus as their Savior. Jesus does not look for us to have the perfection of sinlessness but rather the righteousness of the remission of sins through faith in Jesus. With that faith we have the power to do works that truly please our God. Saying **“Lord, Lord”** from a heart of faith is a good work!

In the explanation of the first commandment we confess: **“We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.”** We can do that only through faith. Jesus Christ is the Rock of our salvation and the One on whom we build. One day we will all stand before him as our Judge. He will look at what we have been doing as we confess each Sunday in the words of our creeds. For those deeds to be acceptable they must be open evidence of the inner relationship of the heart with Jesus. Then we are truly building on the Rock.

WE BUILD ON THE ROCK WHEN WE PUT GOD’S WORD INTO PRACTICE IN OUR LIVES (vv. 24-27).

ONLY ONE FOUNDATION IS ACCEPTABLE TO OUR GOD.

We need to keep the final outcome of life in mind. If there were going to be no storms or floods there would be no special wisdom in building on rock – the sand foundation would serve just fine. The final outcome after the storm makes the difference. Faith in Jesus or lack of faith might all look the same during this life but the final outcome of standing before Jesus on the Last Day makes all the difference in the world!

The only acceptable foundation is Jesus Christ. The sensible builder in the picture of this text saw what the rock would do for his house. ²⁵**“The 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.”** The builder did not think only of today. He did not think only of the easiest or cheapest way. He saw what was really important to his building – the foundation – and proceeded accordingly. The Lord wants us to learn from all of this: 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.”** We can’t focus on today only – though that is important. We look on the house of life we are building today to last through the supreme ordeal of death to eternal life. Through faith in Jesus we build on the Rock – yes, we do – and he empowers us through Word and Sacrament to do that. With the hymn writer we can sing, *“On Christ the Solid Rock I stand.”*

OTHER FOUNDATIONS WILL BE WASHED AWAY IN THE END.

The hymn writer says, *“All other ground is sinking sand.”* Jesus uses the picture: ²⁷**“The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell**

with a great crash.” It was easier and outwardly the building appeared just as strong and sturdy. And yet it was inexcusable – even from the standpoint of common sense. The person should have known better.

We should know better today – there is no excuse! The question we must ask ourselves is this: “Am I building on the Rock Jesus or on another foundation?”

- Are we satisfied with only church attendance – even if we didn’t really hear and pray?
- Are we satisfied that if we upgrade the moral standards of the world a notch or two, or have succeeded in getting prayer back into the schools, or stopping gay marriage, we will have succeeded in promoting God’s righteousness?
- Are we satisfied to think that true contrition in God’s sight is relying on the historic faith?
- All of those things might be quite close to the Rock, but they are not building on the Rock

The supreme test will be made on the Last Day. We are told that one house “**did not fall**” and the other “**fell with a great crash.**” The difference was the foundation – rock versus sand. The difference on the Last Day will be Jesus Christ versus us. As we stand through faith in him we will stand tall and gain the victory. He is truly the Rock of Salvation on whom we are to build. This ends the Sermon on the Mount. Now the response:

WE BUILD ON THE ROCK WHEN WE RESPOND TO WHAT HE HAS TAUGHT US (vv. 28-29).
LOOK AT CHRIST’S RESPONSE TO HIS FATHER’S WILL.

Fulfilled God’s law perfectly. He died to pay for all the sins of the world. He is the Rock on whom we stand and build. We now have a standing for the Day of Judgment.

LOOK AT THE RESPONSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

He works faith in the hearts of people through the Word and the Sacraments. He keeps us in that faith through his work in those same Means of Grace, the Word and the Sacraments.

LOOK AT OUR RESPONSE TO THE WORK OF THE TRIUNE GOD.

We do have the power to reject it. As far as God is concerned that is inexcusable. Yet people are doing it every day. They are building their lives, hopes and dreams on something or someone else other than Jesus.

Or, like the people of our text we can accept it in faith and make it our own. We are told that “**the crowds were amazed at his teaching.**” They saw the authoritative power of Jesus and accepted it. With the Holy Spirit at work they believed and built on that Rock Jesus. Will we respond in that same way? As we see his authoritative power? As we see the Spirit’s work in us? Let us respond by continuing to build on that foundation of Jesus Christ, the Rock of our Salvation.

We can build or rebuild as the case may be. Some hesitate to rebuild on the same ground where they were flooded out or an earthquake occurred. Others rebuild on the same spot with courage and conviction. Yet, they learn some lessons, take precautions, and engineer accordingly. Even a shattered marriage or a faltering family can be rebuilt. Some hesitate to do that and move on. With appropriate changes and the right foundation of faith in Jesus Christ it can be done! With that foundation we can find happiness here and eternally! Build on the Rock in your life! Amen.