

The Second Sunday After Pentecost (June 14, 2020)	1856
O. T. Lesson: Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28	Service of the Word: p. 38
Epistle: Romans 3:21-25a, 27, 28	224
Gospel: Matthew 7:15-20	Psalm 78
Text: Matthew 7:21-27	382
Theme: <u>Put Jesus' Word Into Practice.</u>	194 v. 1
I. Not like the foolish builder.	194 vs. 2-5
II. Not like some who say, "Lord, Lord."	
III. But like the wise builder.	

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 7:21-27 Jesus says:

"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. Many 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?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

"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 that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 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 that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Lord God, sanctify us through your truth; your word is truth.

Dear fellow believers,

The doctor gave the patient a prescription and said, "Take one pill every eight hours." The patient agreed with the doctor. The patient fully understood that he should take one pill every eight hours. But the next morning, when the patient got up, he was in such a hurry getting ready for work, that he forgot to take his pill. That afternoon he suddenly realized that he had forgotten his pill in the morning, and also that he had forgotten to bring one along to work to take now, but he didn't bother to drive home and get one. That evening, finally the patient took his medication. He took three pills, to make up for the ones he had missed during the day. Doctors tell us that this type of thing happens too often, and the results can be disastrous. The patient did not do what the doctor said. Even though he agreed with the doctor and knew exactly what to do, the patient did not put the doctor's words into practice.

A similar tragedy can occur in our Christian lives if we do not put Jesus' words into practice, for then, how can Jesus' word do us any good? Through his word, Jesus has brought us to faith in the full and free salvation that he has won for us on the cross, making us his own through his forgiveness. And in his word he lovingly prescribes the Christian life his children are to live, a life of faith, a life motivated by his love and forgiveness, a life guided by his word, a life that is such a privilege for us Christians to

live. Our text is the conclusion of Jesus' great sermon on the mount, where he instructed his disciples in Christian living. He told them to keep God's law. Not only did he tell them, "Do not murder;" but more than that, "Do not hate." Not only did he tell them, "Do not commit adultery;" but more than that, "Do not entertain lustful thoughts." Not only did he tell them, "Love your neighbor;" but more than that, "Love your enemies." From his word, we know the life of faith that Jesus has set before us to live. As Christians, we realize that this is the life for us to live. Jesus urges us to follow through and put it into practice. Put Jesus' Word Into Practice. Not like the foolish builder. Not like some who say, "Lord, Lord." But like the wise builder.

Jesus wants us to grow in our Christian life of sanctification. He wants our life of faith to be strong and secure, so that it cannot be shaken and destroyed. He compares our building of our faith life to a man building a house. There is a right way and a wrong way to build. First let's take a look at the wrong way. Jesus says, "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 that house, and it fell with a great crash."

He was a foolish man, but not a stupid man. He was smart enough to know how to build a house, and surely he was also smart enough to know that it is important to have a solid foundation under a house. But foolish, because he just didn't bother to build his house on a solid foundation, but rather, he built his house on sand.

Why didn't he bother to build on a solid foundation? Well, it would be more work to build on uneven rock, and he might have had to dig several feet before hitting rock. It's much easier to build on sand. If one corner is a bit low, you just shovel a little more in. When he built the house it was probably nice weather. The rain was not pouring down. The streams were not overflowing. The winds were not gusting strongly, so it just didn't seem that important to build on a solid foundation.

But in the end the man was greatly disappointed. A storm came, one of those sudden and violent rains, not uncommon in Palestine. "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." All the man had done ended up in destruction, and he ended up with nothing.

Jesus says, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice" is like that foolish man. People who have heard Jesus' word, have been instructed in the Christian faith, but still are not active Christians, who live their lives trusting in Jesus and guided by his word. Or people who attend church Sunday after Sunday, who surely hear and understand Jesus' word, but do not put what they hear and understand into practice. Somehow, at the time, it just doesn't seem that important to them to do what Jesus says. Such a mere knowledge of God's word is useless and worse than useless if it is not followed by practice. What good can it do if a person knows he should refrain from evil, live a Godly life, love others, help others, be charitable, participate in the Lord's work, pray and so on, if he will not do it? So also, what good can it do a person if he knows the gospel truths of the salvation Jesus has won for him, yet does not accept them in true faith? Hearing Christ's words without putting them into practice is at best a head and mouth faith, but not true faith of the heart. When the storms of troubles, adversities, and temptations come, such a foundationless faith will surely not stand, but will fall with a great crash.

Jesus gives us a glimpse of the ruins on the final day of judgment, when those

who have not put his word into practice stand before him and he judges their hearts. They may be able to fool other people, but they will not be able to fool the Lord. Jesus says, "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. Many 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?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

It has been said that in times of war, everyone in the fox holes and trenches prays and looks to God for help. When in great trouble, just about everyone will call out, "Lord, Lord." But then later, after the trouble is gone, after they are out of the trenches and fox holes, they once again have no use for living their lives guided by Jesus' word. Is that true saving faith? Jesus says, "Only he will enter heaven who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." And what is God's will? It is God's will that people come to the knowledge of the truth, the truth of Jesus' words. Hearing Jesus' words and putting them into practice is God's will. Through Jesus' word, God wants us to know the full and free salvation he has won for us in our Savior. Through Jesus' word, God wants us to have true saving faith that puts that word into practice, a faith that lives each day guided by that word.

Sad to say, there are many whose faith life is far from Jesus' word, many who even prophesy in the name of the Lord. Yes, people can even proclaim God's word to others, and still not have a true and living and active faith themselves. That's why the Apostle Paul says, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (I Cor. 9:27)

And there are the many who prophesy or preach in the Lord's name, but they go about proclaiming a message that is far from Jesus' word; the many who proclaim Christ only as a great teacher of earthly truths, only as a model and example to be followed, instead of proclaiming his word, that he is the crucified and risen Savior from sin. There are those who proclaim that people earn salvation by works, like the Pharisees and teachers of the law of Jesus' day. But Jesus says, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." For Jesus' word proclaims salvation through his righteousness alone. False teachers and preachers usually think they are right, and they may appear to be great, and they may appear to do great things. They may even drive out demons and perform miracles. They may have magnificent church buildings and a great number of followers. They may even appear on TV. But if they are not guided by Jesus' word, then really they don't know the Lord. And on the Last Day the Lord will tell them, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers." All they have done is evil, because they have not put Jesus' word into practice. They have built a house without a foundation, and it will not remain standing.

There will be many in ruins on the day of judgment, but there will also be those whose faith life stands unshaken, Those who have built their lives upon Christ and his word, those who have put Jesus' word into practice and built wisely. "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 that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." The wise man built his house right. He had learned how to build a house that could withstand the

most adverse weather conditions. He had done his homework, and he followed through and did what he had learned. He built on rock, a solid foundation.

That house was attacked from all sides. The rain beat down upon the roof, the streams rose and the floodwaters pushed against its foundation, and the winds blew against the sides of that house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. The man had built it right, and he was not disappointed.

Jesus says, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like that wise man." Jesus is urging us to build our faith life right, to build upon him alone as our solid foundation. We know from his word how to live a life that remains unshaken, but if that word is going to do us any good, we need to follow through and put it into practice. "Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it." Those who put Jesus' word into practice are indeed true Christians. They build their faith life solidly, correctly, according to God's word, trusting alone in him and the salvation he has won for them in Christ. Let the storms of adversity and troubles come from all sides; the Christian is prepared to withstand them. His faith is genuine and solid, built upon the Savior. His life is filled with works of obedience to Christ's word, works of love, pleasing to God. Such a life proves his faith to be genuine, because, "without faith it is impossible to please God." [Heb. 11:6]

We can hardly consider these verses without asking ourselves the obvious question, the question that Jesus intends for us to ask: Am I a wise or a foolish builder? Surely we see that by ourselves we have often been foolish builders, who have failed miserably to put Jesus' word into practice in our lives. We begin once more by putting into practice the very heart of his word, his forgiveness for our failures and shortcomings. Then we see the wonder, that his forgiveness and his righteousness has made our lives pleasing to God. That forgiveness and righteousness motivate us to strive ever harder with all the power God gives us to serve him with our lives by putting his word into practice. May God enable us to be wise builders every day, to his glory.

Amen.

May he who began a good work in you carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ. Amen.