

“The Value of the House”- Matthew 7:24-27

I was 59 years old before I could do something that most of you had done years before and that was to build or buy a house. In 2010 our financial advisor told us it was time. So Kay spent months on the internet looking at 55 and up places to live in. Kay and I finally settled on Fredericksburg and the 55 and up place where we wanted to live and then came the big decisions. I got to pick the lot and Kay got to pick the model we were to build. So in November of 2010 Tri-Cord builders started building our house which was completed in March of 2011. Living in Virginia Beach at the time we couldn't be there every day to watch the house being built but Wanda our builder salesperson was kind to take pictures of our house going up step by step. So we have a picture book of our house being built in each phase: From the laying of the foundation to the putting down the sod for the yard.

They are still building many houses in our neighborhood and it is interesting and even fascinating as we walk the neighborhood to watch how each house is built. They cordoned off the property to prevent erosion, dig a hole, and then a huge cement truck with a long hose comes in and they pour the foundation. Some foundations appear to be very solid and will last the owners a long time. Some that we see look like any minute they could drop into the ditch next door. As we watch them do this I am remembered of the parable that Jesus told about building the foundations of two houses.

Jesus had spent quite a lot of time teaching in what we call the Sermon on the Mount. If you want to know anything about the Christian faith and how to live it, read Matthew 5, 6, 7. It is down-to-earth practical ways on how to live in relationship with God and with others.

In this passage that was read, Jesus finish his teaching by pulling all of this together with the illustration of building. “If you hear these words and act on them you will be like the man who builds his house on a solid rock. Everyone who does not act upon these words will be like the man who builds his house on sand. Jesus would have known about building because he grew up in a carpenter's family. He would also have known the region that had many valleys which were

dry most of the time but could fill with torrents of heavy rain that came in the rainy season. But Jesus is also talking about setting a sure foundation for living a godly life.

Jesus tells the story of two men who decide to build houses. Both homes are comparably the same. Both houses are well built. Both men cared about the kind of house they built because they were planning on living there. The only difference is that one house is built on rock and the other is built on sand. As a city boy I probably wouldn't know the difference at first, so I could easily be fooled. But Jesus' listeners knew immediately what the problem was. They knew where to build and where to avoid. If they chose a bad location it would not be for the lack of knowledge, but for a lapse of judgment. Rightly, then these people would agree that the guy who built his house on sand was foolish. The Greek word means the same thing as our English word, moron. They have not erred for shortage of information.

We are finishing up a series of Jesus' parables entitled "Summer Stories". These stories were told in order that those who heard them would begin to know the nature of a relationship with God, and then they would know what God wants them to do and be. In this parable Jesus is stating the importance of building a strong foundation for life with God as the center or the rock of our lives. More specifically that the ground to which you build your life on determines the durability of what you build.

There are three things of which Jesus speaks about in our story. These are rock foundations of life. First of all, the foundations of life consist of the ground upon which you build. You can build your life on rock or you can build it on sand. There are no other options. The wise builder took the time to find land that would hold his house for an indefinite amount of time. The rock builder took a longer time, spent more money, and used more energy to build a house that was built for the long run. His work would pay off. The builder on the sand, on the other hand, found the easy flat ground in the sandy bed of a stream. His work would take a much shorter time, less cost, and less energy to build. He would be able to move into the house very quickly and enjoy its benefits right away. He was living

for the “now”. As he was moving into his new home he looked over at his neighbor building on the rock and probably thought, “Poor guy, it’s going to take forever to move into his new home. “

From the outside both houses looked the same. The difference was their foundation. The same is true in life. You and I spend our entire lives building different foundations. Some foundations are sand and others are rock. When we are children we build a foundation for our lives as we learn to be disciplined, good listeners and good learners as we obey the guidance of our parents and other grown-ups. When we become teenagers and adults we hopefully begin to take more seriously the foundations we build. We have to decide our vocation foundation: whether or not to work or get an education. The quick attraction of going to work and earn money now often blinds us from taking more time to get educated and be better off in the long run. As we grow older we have to decide our retirement foundation: to discipline ourselves to save money in order that we can retire in comfort and free of worry or spend money foolishly now and have to work much longer in order to hope to be able to retire sometime. There are many other foundations of life that we are challenged with. The foundations of life consist of the ground to which you build them on.

Second of all, the foundations of life are going to be tested by the storms of life. In his story Jesus says that the storms came suddenly upon these two men and their houses. Jesus is very vivid in describing the very fierce storm. The rains pounded down. The waters flooded the land, and the wind beat the walls of the houses. The house built on the rocks survived very well. The storm collapsed the house of the man who built in on the sand.

The storms of life can come to us very quickly and with great severity. Take for example the Kennedy family. They lost their first son killed in the war in 1944. They lost a daughter in an airplane crash in 1948. One of the children was born with severe mental challenges. They lost another son to an assassination in 1963 and then another son in 1968 to assassination. In the next generation one of them lost a leg to cancer. One was killed in a plane crash in 1999, one died of alcohol abuse. Sometimes the storms of life will come to us and sometimes with

great severity. We are not exempted from the storms of life. They come to us from all directions. But there is hope.

Third of all, the stability of life is based on the foundations we build. All material one uses in building are important. But the material is not as important as the foundation. The foundation for us is Jesus Christ and what he taught and what he did. He is our rock. Take a child to the beach and he will soon build an sand castle. When the tide comes in the castle will be gone. A life that is built on sand collapses. How many times have we built on lives on things we thought would last and eventually collapses?

The decisions we make about our foundations are eternal decisions. When the wind, rain, and storms of life come and they will, what foundation is your life-house built on: your mind, your body, and your soul? We only get one. What kind of foundation is your life depended on?