

“FIXER UPPER: I – WHAT’S YOUR FOUNDATION?”

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Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28

Matthew 4:24-27

Well, I have to begin by saying that it’s ironic that my sister Susan is the soloist this morning, because you have her to blame for the sermon series I’m starting today. She’s the one who got me hooked on a television show on HGTV called “Fixer Upper.” I came to it late in the game, probably around season 4. I was telling her one day about another show I was watching on HGTV and she said, “No, you’ve gotta watch ‘Fixer Upper.’” So, because I always do everything she tells me to do, I started watching it – and quickly became hooked. I also discovered when I would tell other people about it that most of them had been watching it from day one.

But, if you’re one of the few who haven’t seen it, let me tell you a little bit about the show. It stars husband and wife Joanna and Chip Gaines, who live in Waco, Texas with their children, and they specialize in taking run-down houses and bringing them back to life. Now, that description says what they do, but it doesn’t convey the absolutely amazing things they do to these houses! They completely transform them!

Even though I began watching in season four, I was able over time to go back and watch all of the episodes of the series starting with day one. And sadly, the show came to an end just a month or so ago.

But I've learned about a whole lot of new things by watching it – like something called “shiplap” and phrases like “good bones” and “curb appeal.” And one of the things that is abundantly clear in every episode is how important it is for a house to have a good foundation. In fact, one of the last episodes I watched was their crew picking up and moving an entire house – taking down one foundation and building another – before placing the house down in its new home.

Foundation is everything for a house, and, oh friends, if it's important for a house, how much more important is it for your life?

Well,, that's exactly what Jesus is talking about in this morning's Gospel lesson from Matthew. He's inviting his listeners, including us, to think about the foundation of our own lives.

But before we consider that, let me point out to you that Jesus is speaking these words at the very end of the Sermon on the Mount, so it's part of a larger

speech he is making – in fact, it the conclusion to his sermon. The Sermon on the Mount covers three whole chapters in the Gospel of Matthew. It includes the Beatitudes – you know, blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are those who hunger and thirst; and it goes on to Jesus inviting us to remember that we are the salt of the earth, a city set on a hill. As I said, Jesus goes on for a long time with these words of wisdom and instruction, and then he gets to these sentences today.

Verses 24-27, hear them again: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell – and great was its fall!”

Now, everyone who was listening to Jesus that day could visualize exactly what he was saying, and I daresay, so can we. If you’ve ever watched someone build a sand castle on the beach, and then, in the blink of an eye, watch a wave come and destroy it, then, well, you know what Jesus is saying.

And even if you haven't seen that, you have probably, if you've lived any length of days, known the power of some pretty strong waves trying to knock you down. A sudden illness, unnerving test results, loss of a job, a sudden breakup, financial distress, family strife, war, and well, you name it – all of those things have the power to knock you down or drown you – unless, you have a strong foundation.

How many times have I heard from some of you or said to myself that we don't know how people get through the storms of life without faith in God and support from the family of God? We want them to know the same thing that Jesus said that day – that there is a way to keep those things from taking them down – and the way is Jesus.

That day, standing there amidst the crowd, Jesus told them that, but left the choice up to them. You can build a strong foundation for your life, if you accept me and do as I have commanded you – or you can try to tackle it on your own and turn away from the gifts I offer you.

As I say time and again, this world woos us into ways that are not of God, and in this case, the world woos us into thinking that we can provide a solid foundation for our lives by, for instance, building up our bank accounts, or racking up awards and honors and prestige, or getting as many degrees as we can. And all

of that is good, but those things will not save you when, as the hymn says, “the storms of life are raging” – only the Lord can.

Friends, what’s your foundation? Have you built your life on Christ, the solid rock? Are you seeking to live as he called all of us to live, for others and with others? Oh, if you haven’t, you’re missing out on the greatest gift ever offered to you by God himself. You know that old hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”? That’s exactly what God offers you – a friend to walk with you, and guide you and lift you up and carry you when the floods of life threaten to drown you.

Have you accepted that gift?

What’s your foundation?

You know, a few weeks ago, on a Saturday morning, I watched the funeral service for Barbara Bush – and I know some of you did as well. It was just beautiful – the music, the speakers, everything about it. And what made it so beautiful was that people told stories about Barbara – true, real stories, not sugar-coated stories making her out to be some sort of saint. She was who she was.

But I'll tell you what. I realized that what I had suspected all along was true – Jesus was the foundation of Barbara Bush's life. She lived those Beatitudes – she cared for the poor and for those who couldn't read, she let her light shine, she shared her faith in tangible ways. And when the storms of life raged against her – especially when she lost her little girl to leukemia, and when she had to endure the horrible things people said about her family – especially her husband and son – her foundation, Jesus Christ, never failed her – he never failed her.

And my friends, Christ will never fail you either. If you claim him as the Lord of your life, and make him the solid rock, your foundation, he will be with you through everything life brings your way – good or bad.

So as you come to the table of communion this morning, where you'll be reminded as you take the bread and drink the cup of the depth of his love for you, if you have not asked him into your life – do it today. Just say, "Lord, I need you to be my foundation. I open my heart and invite you in, and ask you to guide me all the days ahead."

It's as simple as that. And, if you have already invited him into your life and lean on him as your solid rock, say a prayer of thanksgiving for that as you come

forward, and ask him to continue to stir up in your heart a desire to live as he wants you to live.

Let me close with an image for you to think about as you leave today:

One day a little girl had an accident and got a bad cut on the fleshy part of her eyelid. The doctor caring for her in the emergency room knew that she'd have to have stitches, but he also knew that, because of the location of the cut, he couldn't use anesthesia on her. He talked to the little girl and told her what he had to do, and asked if she could be brave and hold still, without jumping. She thought for a moment and said, "I think I can, if my Daddy can hold me while you do it." So her Daddy took her in his lap, and held her tight against his chest while the surgeon did his work as quickly as he could. The little girl didn't flinch a bit. She just held on tightly to her father. (James W. Moore, *There's a Hole in Your Soul Only God Can Fill*, "Commitment to God," p. 103).

Friends, Christ is there for us always and forever, we only need to hold tight and cling to him. He is the solid rock, he is our foundation. All other ground is sinking sand. Build your life on him. May it be so.

Amen.