

## **Built On The Rock** **Matthew 7:15-29**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

As good Lutherans reading this text, we might well ask, “What does this mean?” We must remember to take this verse in context, and the context is that our text for today is the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount.

There is a lot of law here, law that is ticklish when viewed in light of today’s pluralistic approach to religious matters. How often have I heard people say, “It doesn’t matter what church someone goes to, as long as they go.” There are many who like to say that all Christians are basically the same with only a few minor differences.

Jesus disagrees with today’s pluralistic approach to Christianity. He speaks plainly that while there are those on the last day who will say to Him that they prophesied, drove out demons, and performed miracles in His Name - the name of Jesus Christ - He will declare to them, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” In other words, there are those who have worn the label of Christian, and those today whom may claim the title of Christian, who will not wear it for eternity. Indeed, they will find themselves where Christ isn’t for eternity. Yes, that means they will be with Satan in his kingdom for eternity.

Dearly beloved of God, what does this mean? How many go through great work and preparation to plant gardens, trim bushes and hedges, paint, and otherwise go to great lengths to beautify their homes? It is a never-ending tasks. There is always something to do. It might be something gone wrong that needs fixing, or some small touch to make ascetically pleasing.

Dear friends in Christ, do you put the same energy and effort into the preparation of your eternal home in God’s eternal kingdom? Here we are in the middle of the Trinity season in the church year. It is the season of discipleship in which we acknowledge God’s work to build us up into His church for all eternity, and we rejoice and bask in what He accomplishes in and through us.

We need to have eyes wide open though, just as Jesus says, watching out for false prophets and avoiding thistles and bad fruit. With all the hurt in our nation, the hatred, murder, and mayhem, there is plenty being said without the name of Christ, people building their hopes on the foundation of man's love for man.

Christ's church has something better to offer, true love that can break down barriers and offer the only true healing. We need to build upon that foundation which is none other than Jesus Christ.

To build on a firm foundation, to be able to watch out for false prophets who would lead us astray, we need to know the truth. Satan and all false prophets can twist and use the Bible like pros. If Biblical knowledge on our part is lacking, will we be easily lead astray? Of course!

It is amazing how many people process everything they hear that has the name of Jesus Christ attached to it and believe it. They claim, “Well they talk about Jesus, it must be true.” This is foolishly naive. In Acts, (chapter 17) we learn about the Berean Christians who listened to Paul and then examined the Scriptures to see whether what was said is true.

Today, people want other books than the Bible, “Pastor, can you tell me a good Christian book to read about this or that topic?” I simply ask, “Have you read your Bible yet?” It looks like such a big book and it is daunting. It is made up of 66 little books, each one of them has a central theme, salvation in Christ Jesus. Pick one out and read it.

We want a heavenly home, but we don’t want to be challenged in our own beliefs, the things we have put together to make our own personal religion. How often have people said, “Yeah, I know, I heard the sermon,

but I know what I believe.” Where have they gotten their beliefs, from the Word of God? In most cases, those who make such claims couldn’t tell you whether Malachi is in the Old or New Testament, much less what the book is about. And they want to claim that their belief is Christian.

False prophets try and lead us astray. They come out with their thorns and thistles, they have their signs and wonders, trying to thrill the masses. Usually, they talk a little bit about Jesus, and then point people to themselves, how they need to be the change – in themselves and in the world. Pointing inwardly does not give nourishing food.

The Jews in Jesus day wanted those signs and wonders, even demanding them of Jesus to prove who He was. Jesus proclaimed He’d give no sign except the sign of Jonah. The sign of Jonah was Christ’s coming forth from the belly of the grave on the third day.

Today, there are many theologians of signs and wonders. They want people to look at them in their fancy clothes, they brag about what they can do, how they have built their big congregations. They point to their own works and speak a little about Jesus. Jesus says what will happen to them and the foolish people who follow them or are enticed with their words or who give little concern to the foundation of their eternal home.

How often are we the foolish people? We like to hear nice things that entice us and lure us so that we don’t need to give up our security in the world. How foolish are we, spending our time in pursuit of all sorts of things in this world, and when it comes to building a lasting eternal foundation, we sometimes squander what God would graciously give us in Christ Jesus.

Christ is the rock on which Christ builds His church. We are to hear the Words of Christ and put them into practice. And that Word of Christ is simple: Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Bryleigh was united to Christ last week, and today Princeton Michael was robed with Christ’s righteousness.

You hear the Word of Christ today and put it into practice; whosoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven them; take eat, this is my body; take drink, this is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you for the remission of sins; My peace I give to you, not as the world gives.

The firm foundation is Christ alone, pointing to self or works is to build upon sand. While the works of faith will be evident in our lives, Paul declares to us the foundation of our eternal dwelling, perfect righteousness. That perfect righteousness comes from God, apart from the law, through faith in Christ Jesus, to all who believe.

This righteousness is purchased by Christ, by His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. All have sinned, but as Christ commands, we are justified freely, our sins removed by the grace of God as the atoning sacrifice is applied to us - building us upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

Today’s sermon hymn says it so well, “Built on the rock the church does stand.” Built on the rock! It was and is being built, not by human hands, but by Christ. Christ is building us up as His temples. Christ comes and removes sin, making us holy. Christ gave up His heavenly home to come to us, to redeem us from our empty pursuits of this life. In His blood, we are forgiven our worldly preoccupation with making sure we have the best earthly dwellings while often forgetting to prepare our eternal home.

Christ warns about false prophets, those who rely upon themselves. Earlier in this Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had said, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:20 ESV) No one can meet that perfect demand of righteousness, except God Himself.

Christ was pointing to His own righteousness, His perfect, innocent, holy, sinless righteousness that would be

sacrificed upon the cross and distributed to believers.

It is in our sinfulness that, by God's grace, we are built on the rock. Christ's building plan by which He constructs His church, is that He Himself comes to build His church in Water, word, and meal. In these wonderful means of grace, Christ Himself builds His church upon Himself, for He is the rock.

Did you hear the 4<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> verse of our hymn? Listen to it again.

Here stands the font before our eyes telling how God did receive us; The altar recalls Christ's sacrifice and what His table doth give us; Here sounds the Word that doth proclaim Christ yesterday, today, the same, yea, and for aye our Redeemer.

United to Christ's death and resurrection in the water of baptism, you are built on the Rock.

You are built on the Rock as Christ gives you His own flesh to eat and His own blood to drink, sealing forgiveness and granting an eternal place in His kingdom.

Christ gives to you the reality of your new condition, He is the Word building you up in the forgiveness He proclaims to you, which He Himself purchased.

Grant, then, O God, where'er men roam, that, when the church bells are ringing.

Many in saving faith may come where Christ His message is bringing; "I know Mine own, Mine own know Me; you, not the world, My face shall see. My peace I leave with you." Amen. You are built upon the Rock and live in His peace. Amen.