

June 7, 2026
Pursuing the Kingdom: A Firm Foundation
Matthew 7:24-29
Vernon Advent Christian Church

As we come to the final verses of Matthew 7, and the end of what's known as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we have arrived at the conclusion, not only of a sermon, but of one of the greatest teachings ever given. According to the website, *The Bible Project*, "the Sermon on the Mount is widely considered the greatest and most influential teaching in human history." Spanning just three chapters, this foundational message from Jesus challenges our earthly assumptions with heaven's values, while offering a perfect and radical standard of ethics.

As we've already seen, in these chapters, Jesus has been describing what life in the kingdom of God looks like. He has shown us the character of kingdom citizens in the Beatitudes. He has taught us about being salt and light in the world. He has addressed a variety of topics like anger, lust, truthfulness, forgiveness, generosity and prayer as a way to show us that being a citizen of the kingdom is not about outward religion but about having an authentic relationship with God.

And as Jesus brings His sermon to a close, He does something remarkable. He does not end with an in depth summary. He does not conclude with an inspirational thought. He does not say, "I hope you found this talk helpful." Instead, He leaves every listener with a decision to make.

For throughout the final section of chapter 7, Jesus has been presenting contrasts which we began to look at last week. Jesus spoke about two gates and two roads. And in reality, it's really the same road heading in two opposite directions. The broad road which leads to destruction and the narrow road which leads to life.

He also contrasted trees that produce good fruit with trees that produce bad fruit and those that say "Lord, Lord" but don't truly follow Him with those that actually "do the will of the Father." And now He ends the sermon by talking about two builders who build their houses on two different foundations.

And, again, the message is unmistakable. It is not enough to simply hear the teachings of Jesus. It is not enough to agree with them intellectually. And it is not even enough appreciate them and hold them in high regard. No, the ultimate question is whether we will build our lives upon them. And that is the overall theme of this passage. Pursuing the kingdom of God is not simply about hearing truths about the kingdom. It is about building your life upon the King.

Years ago, I heard about a tourist who visited a coastal town after a devastating hurricane. Many homes had been completely destroyed. Roofs were gone. Walls had collapsed. Entire neighborhoods had been devastated. Yet among the destruction stood one house that remained almost untouched. When asked why it survived, the owner explained that the foundation had been anchored deeply into the bedrock beneath the sand. The storm that destroyed everything around it had struck that house as well, but the difference was not the storm. The difference was the foundation.

That is exactly the image Jesus wants His hearers to see in our passage this morning. The question is not whether storms will come, for they certainly will. The question is what your life is built upon when they do. So, if you are able, would you stand with me in honor of God's word, as I read from the Gospel of Matthew 7:24-29. [Read Passage]

The first point this morning is straight forward, the wise man is the one who walks in obedience. Jesus begins with these words, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." Notice immediately what Jesus is emphasizing here. The wise man is not simply someone who hears. For both builders described in this passage have heard the words of Jesus. So, the difference is not the information given but obedience.

And this is significant because Jesus has just warned us about people who say, "Lord, Lord," but do not truly know Him back in vs. 21. But now He explains what genuine discipleship looks like. It is hearing His words and putting them into practice. The wise man hears and obeys. The foolish man hears and ignores. The contrast is not between believers and unbelievers who are sitting in different places. Jesus is describing the reactions of two different types of people who were in the audience that day and are listening His teaching.

Think about how sobering that is. Again, both builders hear the truth. Both builders know the truth. Both builders have access to the truth. Yet only one acts upon it while the other doesn't. In many ways, this is one of the greatest dangers in the Church. Did you know it is possible to know truth without being transformed by it. In other words, you can know it without knowing "it." A person can attend Bible studies for years. They can listen to sermons every week. They can even quote Scripture from memory. Yet hearing without obedience only produces self-deception by believing something is true simply because you want it to be. But, as D. L. Moody once said, "The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation."

And so, Jesus says the wise man builds his house upon the rock. In the land where Jesus taught, builders often faced a choice. They could build quickly upon the surface sand, or they could dig deeper until they reached bedrock. But digging required a lot of extra effort. It required patience. And it required a great commitment. But when the storms came, the difference became obvious. But notice the wise builder was willing to do the difficult work before the storm came.

And that is a powerful picture of what true life in the kingdom is all about. Kingdom living often involves choices that are difficult in the moment. Forgiving someone who hurt you. Choosing integrity when lying or stretching the truth would be easier. Seeking God first instead of pursuing worldly things. Loving your enemies. Trusting God with your finances. Resisting temptation. These are not always easy decisions to make. But every act of obedience is another layer of foundation being anchored into the Rock.

Well, then in vs. 25 Jesus describes the storm. "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house." Now notice Jesus does not say "if" the storms will come, but "when." Jesus is warning us that the foundations of our lives will be shaken at some time or another. Storms are inevitable. Some storms come through suffering. Some through disappointment. Some through loss. Some through illness. Some through persecution and some through temptation. No one is exempt. For Jesus said in

John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

You see, the truth about storms is that they reveal what we are truly trusting in. Only the person whose life is anchored to Jesus can take heart and have the peace that Jesus offers. And so, Jesus says the wise man's house stood firm because it was built on the rock. So, the stability of the house was not found in its size or its appearance. The stability came from its foundation. But, wait, Jesus is not finished. He now points us to a second builder whose story initially looks remarkably similar to the first, and yet, there is one major difference, the foolish man is a hearer only.

Jesus continues, "And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand." Again, notice that both builders hear the words of Jesus. The foolish builder is not ignorant. He is informed. But he simply chooses not to obey. To connect this passage to last week's, this is the person who has willfully chosen to continue on the broad road that leads to destruction, who produces bad fruit and may even cry out "Lord, Lord" but Jesus will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

That is what makes his foolishness so tragic. The foolish builder likely finished his house faster. He avoided the hard work of digging, work "smarter nor harder" right? Everything may have looked great on the outside. From a distance, the two houses appeared very similar. But the foolish man lost everything.

And isn't that true spiritually? Two people can sit in the same church. Hear the same sermons. Sing the same songs. Participate in the same ministries. Yet one is building their life on faith and obedience to the word of God while the other is building theirs on something else. The point is that the difference may remain hidden for years. Until the storm comes.

And Jesus says the same type of storm struck the second house as well. The rain fell. The floods came. The winds blew. And what happened to the house? "And it fell, and great was the fall of it." This illustrates the total collapse and spiritual destruction of a life that has no solid spiritual foundation when faced with hardship.

And what a tragedy. The issue was not the storm, for storms come to us all. The issue was the foundation. Many people spend enormous energy focusing on what their "house" looks like while neglecting what they are building it on.

As many of you know, Kathleen and I are in the very beginning stages of building a home again. Now, imagine if we spent all our money on the appearance of house but paid very little, to no, attention to the foundation. The siding may look beautiful. The landscaping may be impressive. The furniture may be expensive. But eventually, the hidden weaknesses in the foundation would become visible.

And the same is true spiritually, brothers and sisters. Obedience matters more than our outward appearance before others. You see, Jesus refuses to separate faith from obedience. Not because our obedience earns salvation. But because genuine faith produces obedience. The kingdom of God is not built upon a people acting religious. It is built upon lives surrendered to Jesus.

Now, at this point we might ask how can Jesus speak with such authority. Why should anyone build their entire life upon His words? Matthew answers that question in the final verses where he points out that kingdom people recognize the authority of the king.

Matthew writes, "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching." The word astonished, here, means "overwhelmed, stunned or amazed." And why were they amazed? Because Jesus taught "as one who had authority, and not as their scribes."

This is a remarkable statement. The scribes often taught by quoting other authorities. Rabbi so-and-so says this. Or another teacher has said that. But Jesus repeatedly spoke differently. He said things like, "You have heard it said..." "But I say to you..."

Again and again throughout the gospels, Jesus spoke with divine authority. He did not simply explain God's Word. He stood as the embodiment of it. In fact, He presented Himself as the ultimate standard.

For, notice what He says in vs. 24 & 26, "Everyone who hears these words *of mine*..." Not the words of Moses. Not the words of the prophets. But "these words *of mine*." Jesus is claiming a place no other teacher could claim. The entire sermon ultimately points us to the identity of Christ, namely that He is the living word of God. John makes this abundantly clear at the beginning of his gospel in John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God." And then in vs. 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus could speak the word of God with authority because the words were coming from the authors mouth.

So obedience matters in the kingdom because the King has all authority. Building upon the rock means building upon Christ Himself. The Apostle Paul would write in 1 Cor. 3:11 that "no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." So, the Rock is not merely a set of teachings then. The Rock is the King who gave them.

Imagine boarding an airplane. Now, most of us have never personally inspected the engines of the plane before takeoff. We don't ask to see the pilot's credentials. We don't fully understand every operating system of the plane. Yet, we trust the authority and reliability of the one who is flying it, do we not? In a far greater way, followers of Jesus trust in His authority. Not because we understand everything perfectly. But because we know who He is and that He is good.

And the Sermon on the Mount constantly leads us back to this reality. Jesus is not simply offering advice for a better life. He is the King who is inviting and calling us to be a part of His kingdom, while at the same time, showing us what life in the kingdom looks like.

So what does this passage mean for us? First, we need to examine our foundation. Not our appearance. Not our reputation. Not our church attendance. But our foundation. What are you truly building your life upon? Success in your career? Financial security? Relationships? Personal achievement? All of these things are not evil, in and of themselves, but they are faulty foundations to build your life upon. They may last for awhile, but when the storm comes your house will not stand if it is built on these things. Instead, build your life upon Jesus and anchor yourself to him and set your feet upon the rock that will not fail.

And secondly, ask yourself “Am I simply hearing the words of Jesus or actually obeying them?” James says in James 1:22, “But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.” (James 1:22) What truth has God been calling you to act on? Perhaps it involves forgiveness. Perhaps its in your giving. Perhaps involves your prayer life. Perhaps it means giving up your control, repenting and putting your trust in Him as your Lord and Savior. Whatever it is, its important to realize that the wise builder is not the one who hears the most. It is the one who obeys what he hears.

And so, in our passage today, Jesus leaves us with one final image. Two builders building two houses with one storm and two outcomes. And perhaps the most sobering truth is that the difference between the two was invisible for a long time. Both houses were built. Both looked secure. Both appeared the same from the outside. But eventually the storm revealed everything and one house stood and one house fell because only one was built on a firm foundation, with that foundation being Christ.

And so Jesus leaves every listener with a decision to make. What are you building your life on? The crowds who first heard these words were astonished. But astonishment was never the goal. Transformation was. (Graduates...)

Jesus did not preach this sermon so people would admire it. He preached it so people would obey it. The Sermon on the Mount is not simply a beautiful vision of life. It is an invitation into the kingdom of God. An invitation to build your life upon the rock, which is Christ.

The good news of the gospel is that Christ Himself is the Rock. The One who preached this sermon would eventually go to the cross for sinners. The One who called people to obedience would obey the law perfectly and would bear the judgment we all deserved. And the One who spoke with authority would speak the final word over sin and death and would rise again in victory thus securely the hope of eternal life for everyone who puts their faith and trust in Him.

And so now Jesus invites us not simply to hear His words, but to trust Him, follow Him and build our lives upon Him. For the person who builds their life upon Christ, yes the storms may come, but the foundation will hold. For the kingdom that Christ establishes can never be shaken. Let us pray and prepare our hearts for the Lord's table.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the truth of your word. We confess that it is often easier to hear Your Word than to obey it. Forgive us for the times we have admired truth without applying it and listened without responding.

Lord, search our hearts and reveal the foundation upon which we are building. If there are areas of compromise, pride, fear, or disobedience, bring them into the light and give us grace to surrender them to You.

Help us to be wise builders who not only hear the words of Christ but put them into practice. Strengthen us through every storm and deepen our trust in the One who is our Rock and our salvation. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Rock upon whom we stand. Amen.