Series: From Israel to Everyone: Disciples who Demonstrate God's Presence (a study of Matthew). **Sermon Text:** 7:24-29 2 Foundations
(**See App** for lesson, slides, and to ask questions)

I've been all over the world and seen several of the world's massive, awe-inspiring cathedrals. Most took hundreds of years to fully complete. I think of the masons who dug and carved and laid the first foundation stones. Certainly they understood that they were working on a cathedral they would never occupy. Their vision reaching beyond their own lives, extending to generations they would never meet, yet whose lives would be shaped by the house they built.

I imagine that's the idea that Jesus is conveying as He stands on that hilltop teaching a group that included His chosen twelve, men whom the religious elite likely referred to as a rag-tag group of rejects, but whom Jesus called His beloved.

At this moment in His discourse, Jesus is strategically contrasting a house built on shifting sand and a house built on rock. I say strategically because there's more happening here than a simple moral story. Jesus is dismantling the hollow foundations of the Pharisees who had built a massive, imposing religious system, but they had built it on the facade of human tradition, self-righteous rule keeping, and outward performance. The object of their reverence and the posture of their hearts had shifted completely. They honored God with their lips but their heart was far from Him.

Jesus steps onto the scene and pours out heavenly wisdom, personified in Himself and in His words, for them to see and hear and to begin restructuring the foundation of their house.

This foundation project is our **Big Idea: True wisdom hears the Words of King Jesus and builds a life on them.**

These unlikely, uneducated people sitting on the grass, especially those who would become Christ's inner circle, were to become the first layer of foundation stones.

They would spend the rest of their earthly lives being chiseled, shaped, and broken by the Holy Spirit to become the first builders of an entirely new spiritual house.
They would lay masonry for a magnificent, global, eternal temple, a true religious house that they would only ever see in its full glory from the vantage point of eternity. Before a single stone of this new eternal temple could be laid, Jesus had to issue the warning we studied last week. He knew that the greatest threat to this new house wouldn't be the Roman empire marching against it from the outside; it would be the human heart trying to copy the Pharisees' mistakes from the inside.
As the Master Builder concludes with His last metaphor, lets pretend we're plans examiners and discover the importance of foundation and what it means to build our lives on Christ's words found in **verses 24-27:**

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 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. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

This is more like historical reality, not just an ancient metaphor; it's a covenantal promise that reaches through the centuries right into our lives today. This picture Jesus paints for us in the two types of builders transforms us into a living temple reality. The Apostle Peter says we are like "living stones" being built up into a spiritual house, with Christ Himself as the ultimate Cornerstone.
A "house built on sand" is any system reliant on external behavior, performance-based rule following, and structural appearance rather than internal, active obedience to the truth of God. Israel's religious teachers had constructed a massive framework of oral tradition designed to regulate external behavior. Both they and the Roman imperialistic rule reveal themselves to be nearly identical architectural failures. Jesus exposes these builders as building on a foundation of shifting sand because it relies on human effort, public validation, and if I can be blunt, lip service without a transformed heart. Now, don't miss this: 'Sand' isn't just obvious

bad behavior; It's anything you anchor yourself to that can be pulled from under your feet. You can build a house on a personal relationship, your career status, your financial portfolio, your sports performance, or even your own reputation. These things feel solid when the weather is nice. But when a layoff hits, when a diagnosis comes out of nowhere, or when public opinion shifts, the sand washes out and Crash!! Jesus repeatedly contrasts Himself as the Master Builder. If we step back and look at the sermon as a whole, we can see that Jesus is building His spiritual house with audacious intentionality. In each structural movement, Jesus follows the same pattern: He exposes the human way and then reveals the better way. He removes the sand and replaces it with rock. So when we arrive here at the two builders, Jesus isn't changing subjects. He is showing us that the entire sermon has been a call to build our lives on the foundation He has been laying stone by stone.

We've spent about 15 weeks developing this structural emphasis, if Jesus spends the sermon contrasting two kinds of righteousness, two kinds of piety, and two kinds of priorities, then the final contrast is between these two builders are **two kinds of hearers**:

The **core characteristic of the foolish builder** isn't merely that he **builds,** but that he **hears Jesus' words and fails to act on them**,

The **core characteristic of the wise builder** is that he **hears Jesus' words and puts them into practice**.

Notice that the contrast is not between hearing and not hearing. Both builders hear. Both build for the sake of the contrast, I believe the metaphorical houses are identical. And then both face the storm.

The decisive difference is:

- **Foolish Builder:** Hearing without heeding.
- **Wise Builder:** Hearing that results in obedient actions.

The difference wasn't the information they received; it was the direction they walked. If we hear the words of Jesus on Sunday but live by the playbook of the world on Monday, we are still building on sand. Following Jesus means taking His words off the page, and with the Spirit's help, putting them to work in your marriage, your workplace, and your family schedule. The foolish builder is content to admire and resemble the truth by an outward semblance of obedience. The wise builder makes these truths his heart's desire and faithfully orders his life around them through true obedience. So wise men and women build their lives on Jesus, regardless of current cultural or religious values or circumstances. The Apostles intimately understood Jesus' warning that a magnificent external structure, whether a dynamic ministry, spiritual gifts, or even a strict religious heritage, is nothing but shifting sand if it lacks the internal foundation of love and active obedience.

Matthew drives this understanding home by his closing remarks as to what he witnessed with his own eyes in **verse 28 & 29:**

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Unlike most teachers who cited earlier authorities, Jesus spoke of judging and delivered His message as though He is God's law. Matthew testifies as an "eye witness" that Jesus is the absolute, Heavenly authority, not as a mere interpreter of the Law, but as the living Voice of the Lawgiver Himself. Jesus' final judgement is laying the foundation for a new covenant while exposing the self-righteous rule keeping of the Pharisees as a "house built on sand" that won't withstand the apocalyptic judgment of God.

As this final contrast of two builders sank into the ears and deeply into their hearts and minds, the weight of Jesus' sermon must have fallen over the crowd and sent them into a state of shock and awe. Their initial collective posture of casual listening had to have been utterly undone as they realized this man spoke not with

the safe, unoriginal arguments of their scribes, but with the terrifying, foundational authority of the Creator Himself.

Today, many people like Jesus as a noble moral teacher or a historical philosopher. They say, 'I like His quotes on love and peace.' But Jesus doesn't leave room for us to just hit 'like' on His quotes. The foolish builder treats Jesus like an inspiring podcast host—he listens, nods, and goes right back to running his life his own way. The wise builder hears those same words and lets them change how he handles his money on Monday, how he talks to his spouse on Tuesday, and how he treats his enemies on Wednesday. But hear me clearly: we don't obey to get Jesus to love us. We obey because He first loved us and because His ways are inherently better—written by the Creator Himself to heal our hearts and build righteous, harmonious connections with one another.

We need to realize that Jesus' warning against living on surface sand or bedrock applies to our community life together. The ultimate comfort of this passage is found under the ground. The wise man's house was battered by the exact same rain, the exact same floods, and the exact same winds that destroyed the foolish man's house. **Belonging to Jesus doesn't exempt us from the storms of life or the reality of judgment.**

We've learned that a church can easily become like a spiritual Hollywood set. But here we diligently structure a place where our Sunday best is worn on the inside, polite exchanges are anything but clichés, we don't split ourselves into demographic silos and we work hard to build a house where we truly know who we are both in Christ and in one another. We're an intergenerational family bound together in covenantal intimacy. When it comes to our house, Jesus won't ask how polished our age-segmented programming and worship sets were; He'll look for a people who knew Him, and who will reflect His covenantal love by truly knowing one another. The temptation for modern churches is to use "sand methodologies" to produce quick, visible results. But if we are to withstand the cultural storms hitting our homes and our children, hitting us where we work and play, we must be

willing to dig down deeper together to the deep bedrock of truth. Among other things, this means we stop settling for the fake walls and temporary decorations of traditional, quick fixes.

I feel like the question Jesus leaves us with today isn't how impressive our house looks to the world, but what lies beneath it when the storm arrives. That when strangers walk into our house, they won't experience quick results and polished externals that always crumble under the weight of life's trials and eternity's judgment, but a church family anchored in the slow, heart-level obedience of King Jesus will stand unshakeable.

Later today or tomorrow as you consider how to take your next steps, remember, we can't accomplish that alone, relying on one another for help.

Let's bow our heads and admire the blueprint of the house that Jesus is still building today and surrender our lives to the Master Builder.

Sunday to Monday Connection:

- **Question**: What is one area of your life where you may be hearing Jesus' Word but struggling to put it into practice?
- **Next Step**: This week, choose one specific teaching of Jesus and intentionally put it into practice in your home, workplace, or relationships. Don't try to do it on your own. Ask the Holy Spirit to shape your heart, and invite a fellow believer to encourage you and walk alongside you.
- **Note**: If you are not a Christ follower and would like to explore what all this might mean for you, please speak with someone you know here or one of our church leaders.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. Both houses looked identical from the outside until the storm hit. What hidden "sands" (wealth, career, human approval, religious performance) are people tempted to build their lives on in our culture?
2. What is the difference between admiring Jesus' teaching on an intellectual level and actually practicing His instructions in daily life?
3. How does Jesus' authoritative teaching ("I say to you") contrast with scribes who merely quoted other human authorities, and what does His authority claim over your personal life?

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

- Bible Project - Gospel of the Kingdom Videos and Podcast episodes.
- Bible Project - Heaven and Earth Videos and Podcast episodes.
- Bible Project - Temple Videos.
- Bible Project – Day of the Lord Podcast episodes.

Quotes related to this passage:

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