

Matt. 7:24-27 Built to Last

I'm a fan of the late **Johnny Cash, "The Man in Black"** (picture of Johnny Cash Young) Johnny Cash grew up in a Christian home and started out as a gospel singer however departed from his Christian foundation when stardom took over and he began chasing his dreams, with self on the throne of his life. Success, fame, fortune, women, partying, icon status... From an earthly perspective he had it all. But it seemed the more he got what he wanted the more emptiness he experienced. His life became chaotic, filled with addiction, rage, isolating himself from those who loved him...depicted in the movie about his life- Walk the Line. For some time Cash became suicidal. He said- *"I never wanted to see another dawn," "I had wasted my life. I had drifted so far away from God and every stabilizing force in my life that I felt there was no hope for me."*

But, God wasn't done with Johnny. He came back to his foundation and entrusted his life to Jesus. Just months before he passed away **(Picture of Johnny Cash Old)** he adapted a song called "Hurt", changing some of the lyrics, reflecting on those years his past. "You can have it all, my empire of dirt."

All the success, all the fame, all the fortune, all parties, living what the world would have considered the good life... Johnny Cash says he was building an empire of dirt. At the end of the song he says, "If I could start again, a million miles away, I would keep myself, I would find a way." If I had another shot at life... I would have done it differently.

We come to the end of our study on wisdom from Proverbs and we have seen that there are two ways to live. The foolish life, the life with self on the throne like Johnny Cash experienced for many decades. Or The Good life, under the fear of the Lord. Living according to God's wisdom, with God on the throne, not us.

Today, we want to fast forward from Solomon's call to wisdom... to Jesus' call to wisdom. And this is the culmination of everything we have been studying this Summer about God's Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs because all of God's wisdom points to and finds their perfect completion in Jesus. The question for today is what foundation are you building your life upon?

Jesus talks about two people building houses in this well-known parable in **Matthew 7:24-27**. We know the song...but have we slowed down lately to listen to what Jesus is saying and examine our own foundation? Let me read this story and then give you some context so that we can better understand its significance for our lives.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. **27** The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Jesus starts by saying, "Therefore, anyone who hears these words of mine."

Specifically, the words that Jesus was referring is known as the "Sermon on the Mount"- from Matthew 5-7...the greatest sermon ever. You know it was great because it has become known as THE Sermon on THE Mount. Location- There is strong evidence that the site of this sermon took place on a hill overlooking the Plain of Gennesaret that descends to the Sea of Galilee pictured [HERE](#) (Picture). Atop that hill about 500 ft. above the Sea of Galilee, the Franciscans built a beautiful basilica to commemorate this event. Interestingly, standing on the shores of the sea of Galilee, the shape of this valley creates a natural amphitheater, and with the winds carrying Jesus' voice, he would have been able to preach to enormous crowds with no amplification.

Content- In this sermon, Jesus is describing Life as citizens of the Kingdom of God with Jesus as our King. And his teaching was reconstructing the religious foundation of his day, reinterpreting the teaching of the Pharisees and providing new kingdom ethics. Like Proverbs, it is the call of wisdom from God, inviting us through faith to re-orient our values, vision, and habits from the ways of external righteousness like the Pharisees to whole-hearted devotion toward God. Again and again you hear Jesus say things like, "You have heard it said by your teachers....but truly, I tell you." As his sermon comes to an end in chapter 7, begins to show us that the call of wisdom leads to Himself. In this sermon Jesus said that he would be the one to determine entrance into heaven, having the very power of eternal life and death. In this sermon he's also preparing the soil for his followers in the future to accept Jesus Christ himself as the one upon whom they must build their lives as the cornerstone if they wish to enter the kingdom of heaven.

And at the culmination of his sermon, he shares a story about these two builders (Title Slide). Let's take a closer look at the story. Both builders were building houses, both houses are completed, both houses face a major storm at the end. The major difference of course is the foundation upon which they built their houses.

Both houses from the outside may have looked fine, might look sturdy. The house on the sand may have even looked better. Beachfront property! But looks can be deceiving. Often, this is how it can look from the outside. You might look around at other people's lives and say, man they seem like they have it altogether. They are rich, successful, they have the house, the car, the girl or guy, the family... they seem happy. And maybe you feel like you have a bit of a shabby house in comparison because you haven't had that kind of success, or significance.

Or you look at your own life, and like the Pharisees, it looks great on the outside. Following the rules, going to church, give money, trying hard to be a good person,

but built on the foundation of religious efforts. God is not concerned with outer appearance, he is always looking at our foundation, at our hearts. What is there?

What happens in the story? The great storm comes. Flood comes up, rains come down, the wind rages. Now this great storm in Jesus' story isn't representing challenges or trials that come into our lives- sickness, job loss, relationship challenges... or a hundred other storms of life. In the context of the sermon, Jesus has been talking about entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The great storm represents the passing from this life into God's eternal kingdom.

When the great storm finally ends, one house remains while the other crumbles into a heap of rubble. Why did the house built on sand collapse? It looked great! It may have even used quality building materials. For the simple reason that its foundation is very unreliable, shaky, brittle foundation that was not made to withstand storms. However, the house built on the rock remains fully intact? Why? Because it was built on a solid foundation.

[Show picture of house]. This just looks like a fairly ordinary house, probably doesn't look that different on the outside to most houses on the shores of Gilchrist, TX. But there is something particularly unique about his house. Pam and Warren Adams who rebuilt their home in February 2006 after Hurricane Rita destroyed it the previous year. They hired a contractor to build a house that could withstand a Category 5 hurricane, and that's exactly what it did. [Show picture of house after hurricane Ike.] I'm sure that contractor got a lot of business after that.

[Title Slide] Here in this parable, Jesus is saying- I'm the rock! Friends, Every other foundation- success, ambition, wealth, family, comfort, power, morality, karma, politics, even religious activity... all of it will prove to be sand. An empire of dirt, like Johnny Cash said.

Conclusion:

Johnny Cash- "The greatest joy of my life was that I no longer felt separated from Jesus. Now he is my Counselor, my Rock of Ages to stand upon."

The Sermon on the Mount ultimately points to Jesus as the Rock of Ages. If we try to obey the teaching on the Sermon on the Mount, but miss Jesus, we won't get very far. Matt. 5 unless your righteousness exceeds the Pharisees you will not see the kingdom of God. You've heard it said you shall not murder but you are liable to judgment if you are angry with your brother. Wow- I'm out. I was angry with my brother on vacation. Ultimately Jesus is the only one who could live it perfectly. And his teachings point to him being the one who fulfills the righteous requirements of the Law. He is our rock of ages to stand upon. **What foundation are you building your life upon?** Self? Success? Significance? Will it last through the great storm? Or are you building your life upon the Savior?