**The House that Stood Firm**

**August 30, 2020**

*Matthew 7:24-27*

*“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. 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. 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 the sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*

Here we are, at the end of our Summer, ready (or not) to move into the next wild phase of life. Maybe you are transitioning to a new school, maybe you are a parent with students in a new place, maybe you are simply moving from one grade to the next – wherever you are, it’s new, and “new” always has some anxiety tied to it.

During this Summer, we’ve been looking at the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7. As this will be the last devo on that topic, it is fitting that we end with… well, the end. Jesus closes His message to the people by sharing this short parable of wise and foolish builders. The wise man builds his house on a firm foundation, so it won’t be shaken when tough times comes. But the foolish man builds his house on a shaky foundation, and when storms appear, the house falls. It’s a simple, straightforward story to close out this amazing sermon. The implications of the story in our own lives, however, are profound and challenging.

Let’s look at these two men for a second. They both are relatively smart people, right? They both know how to build a house, and are successful in the actual construction of a house. It takes a pretty knowledgeable person to build a house, no matter where you build it. However, there is an important distinction between a “smart” person and a “wise” person. Sometimes, knowledge gives you a false sense of security. Knowledge, when used without wisdom, is relatively useless and potentially harmful. Jesus is warning us that if we rely solely on what we *know*, that foundation is not enough to keep us standing when hard times come.

Think of it this way: you can learn how to drive by reading books and watching videos. But you don’t become a good driver that way, and you probably wouldn’t get in the passenger seat of someone who told you, “Hop in, YouTube taught me how to drive, I got this!” A good driver is created by putting knowledge into practice.

The application of this parable is stated directly into Jesus’ message. “Hear the words that I just told you, and *do something with them*!” Put them into practice! His message is not about one person listening versus another one not listening, it’s about two people listening, but only one person putting that knowledge into practice. Both “builders” *hear* the words of Jesus, but again, knowledge isn’t the key to what Jesus is sharing. Hearing the words and knowing the words are not enough. A foundation is formed when you actively love your enemies, when you pray daily, when you trust God instead of worry, when you give to the needy, when you traverse the narrow path, and when you practice empathy and patience and compassion. Knowing and doing are different things that ultimately create the difference between a “simple and hard” faith and a “complicated and easy” one that we looked at last week.

I hope and pray you have been exploring the Sermon on the Mount with us over these last few months, both in these Sunday devos and some of our Wednesday videos. But now that we’ve heard these words, may we all take the next necessary step and do something with them. These words require practice. That also means you might not be able to do it all at once – it’s something you continuously work on. But the more you work on these words, the stronger your foundation becomes. When that next crazy storm comes, you will still be standing.

*Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

1. How would you describe the difference between knowledge and wisdom? Why are both knowledge and wisdom important to have? Where does knowledge fall short?
2. Other than the driving example shared in the devotional, what other activities or actions is it important to have practice in addition to knowledge, rather than just knowledge?
3. What do you find in the Sermon on the Mount that is hardest to put into practice?
4. Why do you think Jesus shared this parable at the end of His message instead of the beginning?
5. Do you think the man who built his house on the sand knew the proper way to build a house? Why didn’t he do it correctly? What sort of things in the Sermon on the Mount do Christians “know how to do the right way”, but still don’t do it? Why do you think they don’t follow through?
6. What kind of storms are in your life right now? How are you ensuring that your “house” stands firm in the middle of them?