

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Second Sunday after Trinity, June 21, 2009

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Hymns: 19:1-4, 477:1, 370, 385:1-5 & 10, 637:1-3.
Lessons: Ezek. 13:8-16, 1 Cor. 3:11-23, Luke 6:45-49.
Text: Matthew 7:21-29.
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I can show you places in the Mankato, MN area where you can dig only a foot or two and you are down to solid rock. Then, even though you may not have a basement at all, you can start building your building. Your first course or row of foundation blocks will be built on solid bedrock, the kind which is blasted and cut out of the ground for building very solid-looking buildings, such as the Mankato Post Office, the Blue Earth County Courthouse, the Minnesota State Capital and many other buildings through-out the United States.

Then, too, there are places in the Mankato area where you find only sand for many feet down. To build in such a place requires a really deep foundation wall, and then you still are building on sand unless you haul in some kind of rock, often crushed and then packed down to make a firm footing for your building. The land that Christ Our Redeemer church is built upon, and especially down in the lowest corner of the property is very sandy soil.

Anyone who has built a building has had to build an appropriate foundation. Although the idea of a foundation is the same, today we are talking about a different kind of building and a different foundation. From the hymn we just sang, “On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand” you could guess that

WE BUILD NOT ON SAND, BUT ON JESUS CHRIST

- 1. On judgment day, many will claim that their good works earned them a place in heaven.**
- 2. Hearing Jesus’ words isn’t enough. We must put those words into practice.**
- 3. We build on Jesus, the solid foundation.**

As you heard last week, Jesus warns us not to let false prophets deceive us. Now Jesus warns us not to deceive ourselves either: “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.*” He is speaking about the danger of just going through the motions of being religious. He recognizes that some people will be very convincing to other humans and even to themselves. When they are brought before the judgment seat of Christ on the last Day, they will point to their religious works or to what they call “good works”. They will claim that they have prophesied in Jesus’ name, driven out demons in his name, and performed many other miracles.

In many cases, such persons may have performed only apparent miracles, such as fraudulent healings. They may have deceived many people, but they will not be able to deceive Christ. We must also admit the possibility that in some cases they have actually performed mighty works. They may have possessed special gifts of the Holy Spirit that made these things possible. But they used these gifts to glorify themselves rather than to point to the Lord Jesus Christ as the real miracle worker and as the only Savior of sinners. Their basic problem was that they never recognized their own sinfulness and unworthiness and did not humbly look to Jesus for forgiveness and salvation. So, in spite of all the amazing things they have done, Jesus’ final verdict is to brand them as “*evildoers*” and to condemn them to eternal damnation.

Those whom Christ rejects in the judgment call attention to their own works and expect to be received into heaven on that basis. On the other hand, those who are saved because of the works of Jesus Christ are surprised to hear Jesus call attention to their good works that they themselves had forgotten. Works that God regards as good are evidence of saving faith, fruits of that faith. We read in Matthew 25:34-40 (NIV) ***“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”***

We must always remember that salvation is by faith alone, and the good works that save anyone eternally were all performed by Jesus Our Redeemer – Christ Our Redeemer. I wasn’t around when the name was chosen for Christ Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mankato, but I am sure that the founders of the congregation wanted to call attention only to Christ Our Redeemer.

Hearing Jesus’ words isn’t enough. We must put his words into practice. Christ ends Luke’s recording of this sermon in this way: ***“‘Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.’”*** Luke 6:46-49.

When Jesus talks about putting his words into practice, he means “do” what his words say. That’s the word used in the KJV. That means just what it says, to “do” them and do them repeatedly, and with conviction.

We are saved by faith in Christ alone, but saving faith always finds ways to express itself in good works. Our good works have no merit in themselves, but they do provide evidence of the presence of living faith. Because faith is not visible, on the Day of Judgment Christ will point to the fruits of faith of all believers as evidence that they believed in him as their only Savior and thus should be received into the kingdom of heaven. He does the same thing here.

Throughout this sermon of Jesus which was preached on a mountainside, Jesus has been pointing out what it means to put his words into practice. Read Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7 for yourself this week and review the “sermon on the mount”.

We could look to another example of the importance of good works as fruits of faith in James 2:14-18. ***“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.”*** So just as a good tree brings forth good fruit, so will the believer in Christ bring forth good fruit, fruits of faith which serve God and his fellow man.

The wise man who builds his house upon a rock is the picture of everyone who builds his faith on the foundation of Jesus Christ, on his Words and his works. Jesus Christ is the foundation we must build our lives and our visible church on. Watch out for anyone who tries to tell you anything different!

Saint Paul is especially vocal about Jesus Christ as our foundation: He writes in 1 Corinthians 3:11 ***“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*** In writing to Christians in

Ephesus he told them that they were brought near to God through the blood of Christ. Then he writes ***"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord."*** Ephesians 2:19-21.

The person who builds his entire life on the foundation of Jesus Christ is prepared to endure the trouble and dangers and hardships of this life. His house is solid and stable. Sooner or later it will be tested. It may be the downpours of direct attacks by the devil upon his soul. It may be the gentle rains of temptation which make the ways of the world seem so pleasant, or the fog of confusion of people who surround us in the world who do not know Jesus and Jesus' words. It may be the winds of "change" that the devil makes seem so alluring, or the forceful tornadic winds which seek to blow down and destroy all that we have learned from God's Word, or gentle breezes which lull us to sleep and do not let us find time or make time for Jesus' Words. The wise man will survive, for his whole life rests on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word. He knows that God is with him and will see him through difficult circumstances. He knows that he must go through many troubles to enter into the kingdom of God in heaven. He knows he belongs to the Lord who has redeemed him and that nothing will be able to separate him from the love of God.

So, given the choice of a house that collapses and is utterly destroyed or a house that cannot be shaken, what do we want for a foundation? What do we want to build on? We can build with confidence if we daily build on Christ, as we read in 2 Timothy 2:19: ***"Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'"***

The crowds who listened in as Jesus talked primarily to his disciples ***"were amazed at his teaching."*** They could sense the divine authority with which he spoke, for he himself is God. They could not contradict anything he said, for he had basically just unfolded the Scriptures. Their teachers of the law based too much on their own authority, not on the authority of the Scriptures. We need preachers, teachers and leaders in the church who do not seek to glorify themselves but preachers, teachers and leaders who want to emphasize ***"Thus saith the Lord", "This is what the Lord says"***

He's laid the foundation. You can't start building a structure by creating the roof details first. You start with the foundation. You have to have a solid foundation. We've all seen pictures of houses and strong buildings blown away by very powerful tornadoes. In most cases the foundation is the only thing that stayed firm and strong.

Jesus Christ and Jesus' words are and must always be our foundation. All we do and seek to do must grow from God's Words, recorded for us in the scriptures. Jesus gives us this warning: ***"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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*** But more importantly, Jesus gives us this confidence, a hope and confidence in him and his words: ***"one 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."***

May Jesus always be our rock and our foundation, our mighty fortress and our strong defense! Amen.