



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for June 7, 2020
“From the Mount: On the Rock”
Speaker: Pastor Ashlee Adkins
Scripture: Matthew 7:24-29

Sermon Notes

Deep dive into new series – a Bible study of Sermon on the Mount. I’m going to spend some time today on the bookends of the Sermon on the Mount – the very first verse and the ending section.

Matthew introduces with: “And when he saw the crowds, he went up into the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came up to him...” At first glance, one would think Jesus was retreating from the crowds. When in fact, he was being inclusive.

The Mount of Beatitudes, the beautiful location this sermon took place, served as an amphitheater. While the disciples had courtside tickets, ringside seats, Jesus wanted the crowds to hear. One could also wonder why Jesus didn’t take the opportunity to heal and to perform miracles within this crowd, which is one of the main reasons I’m sure they sought him, but Jesus took this opportunity to teach.

Makes me think of the saying: give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man how to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime. If we dig into that analogy we can discover Jesus’ reasoning here. I could decipher this analogy in a lot of ways but I want to focus on this part: If I give a man a fish, well, easy enough. I have a fish, I give the fish. Not much skill. But If I teach a man to fish, I first have to know how to fish.

And that’s where the sermon on the mount comes in. It’s not a one day fix It’s a lifetime instruction playbook of how to be a disciple, God’s intended way. He needed the people to know so they could teach others. The playbook is opened with God’s grace that we accept through belief, it’s heard with faith that God is the giver of all things, and it’s lived out by action of the gifts God has given us to use for his works.

Ok – so now that we have established the purpose of the sermon on the mount, let’s dig into the first lesson of the playbook. Hear the word of the Lord:

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

And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell – and great was its fall!

Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes. (Matthew 7:24-29)

Let's break down this picture first.

Houses – lives, families, careers, etc.

Storm – challenges, Jumanji game

Wise man – disciples who listen/ do Foolish man – disciples who listen/ don't do; The Rock – Jesus's words

The sand – anything other than Jesus' words

Established my interpretation of the picture Jesus is using, let's dive into a few of its meanings. Jesus is weaning out the real from the fake. Notice that both the wise and the foolish, or the thoughtful and the thoughtless, heard the words. But one group acted on them and the others didn't. One true Foundation God's word/ one wasn't.

And there are a couple things implied in that Jesus doesn't directly say. It's implied that those who heard and didn't do were seen as having heard, yet their actions didn't match what others knew they proclaimed.

"They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not obey them. For flattery is on their lips, but their heart is set on their gain." Ezek 33:31; Matt 15:8-9 Said to pharisees/scribes. Both disciples.

They don't speak out against injustice; they don't lend a hand to the oppressed; they are quick to judge/not to listen; they don't give of their time/money until it hurts but only when it's convenient. They lose faith when things get tough. They claim to know Jesus but they don't live in a way that reflects they know him.

Which brings me to the second thing that Jesus implies. There is some space here – I think every period, space, punctuation mark in the Bible is meaningful. It's not just hearing and doing. Transforming! How many shiver at the sound of the word change? Of course most do. Change isn't easy – it's tough. But we are required to change. We are required to be transformed into being more Christlike. And this portion of the sermon on the mount is hardcore truth from Jesus himself that if you don't, if you don't make room for change, if you don't humble yourself to the Spirit and approach God vulnerably, your fall will be great. No matter how Much you hear God's Word, if you don't allow it to change you, if you aren't uncomfortable and uneasy, those actions you think you are doing for God aren't being done for God and the fall will be great.

My daughter – she is in the why phase. You all who've had toddlers are feeling me right now aren't ya? And folks, Chris and I find ourselves answering these why questions over and over and over again. And it would be easy, and we have resorted, to answering with the "Because I said so," but not often. And actually when we do, guess what, it does absolutely nothing for her.

Answer why because: 1. she understands why we are asking her (love, care, safety, well being). 2: Begin to think in terms and obedience will be one from transformation and thoughtfulness and she can show and practice that with others. We will hopefully have a stronger relationship that is built on trust, openness, honesty, and understanding.

God intends for his relationship to be that way with us. One where we can trust but one where we can also question, wonder, and discover. There will be times when he simply says because I told you so, but when he does and we don't understand, we know we need to anyway because he loves us and desires more for us and we trust him because he stands firm on his promises.

And that's why he gave this warning last, this portion of the mount last. Because friends, we cannot teach what we don't know. We cannot move without the Spirit guiding us. We cannot love our neighbor without first receiving the love God has for us. He shared this w/ the crowds – teach them. Teach us. Share w/ others.

Jesus knew there would be a lot of people who would simply go through the motions. We must not attend church, we must not hear God's word, we must not proclaim we know the Messiah, if we are just doing so to check a box. That won't cut it friends. We must seek God, we must walk through those doors with the expectation of experiencing God, and we leave with the expectation of living for him. We must live in relationship with God and continually asking him where we fall short!

When we build our lives on his words and allow those words to shape us, and our lives reflect Jesus, we can withstand any storm.

I think about the disciples – sitting up close and personal listening to the words from Jesus. Maybe they knew the crowds were still there, maybe they didn't. If they didn't, can you imagine as they turn around and realize that the crowds heard what they heard – and now they know all these people will be watching them. Will their actions match what they say they believe?

Do we realize that friends? As we leave this place, do we realize that the world is watching? This world that is tough, hard to love, and different? But do we also realize that when we found our lives on Jesus' words, we are to share those words through our actions to ensure that same world can see the light of Jesus? We are called to do more than just give a fish. We are called to teach how to fish. Just as he shared his news with all with the sermon on the mount, we are too. There is no them, only us. One and all. Let's go and make a difference.