**Built On The Rock**

 **Matthew 7:15-29**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

As good Lutherans reading this text, we might well ask, “What does this mean?” Our text for today is the conclusion of what has been called the Sermon on the Mount.

There is law here that is ticklish when viewed in light of today’s pluralistic approach to religious matters. Many claiming to be Christians will say, “It does not matter what church someone goes to, as long as they go.” There are many who would like to believe that all Christians are basically the same with only a few minor differences. Nothing could be further from the truth!

In fact, this is not just my opinion, Jesus disagrees with today’s pluralistic approach to Christianity. He speaks plainly that while there will be those on the last day who will say to Him that they prophesied, drove out demons, and performed miracles in His Name – that is, in the name of Jesus Christ – He will declare to them, “I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness!” In other words, there are some who may claim to be Christians, whom Christ will cast away from Him for eternity. Yes, this means they will be with Satan in his kingdom for eternity.

How does this apply to you? How many use the weekend to”‘get into” the garden or do other repairs or building projects on their homes? We just spent a week in Canada. It was a wonderful trip. Twenty of us stayed in a beautiful log cabin! But, it was evident that some work was needed. We paid $4.87 a gallon for gas while there. And prices were quite a bit higher for just about everything.

It was a great vacation, but it was wonderfully refreshing to get back home. We are truly blessed to live in the United States. And while our homes may be the place where we live in this life, both this nation and our dwellings will not last for eternity. And yet, how well we care for them! We toil and struggle to make them the best that they can be.

Dear friends in Christ, do you put the same energy and effort into the preparation of your eternal home in Gods eternal kingdom? Here we are in the 8th week of the Trinity season in the church year. Trinity is the season of discipleship! We acknowledge God’s work to build us up into His church for all eternity, and we rejoice and bask in what He accomplishes in and through us each and every day.

We need to have eyes wide open though, just as Jesus says, watching out for false prophets and avoiding thistles and bad fruit. This spring and summer have been strange in regard to weather. We have watched deluges of rain and wind recently damage or even destroy homes. Flood plains in portions of the Midwest are still water covered. And many have lost homes and are now hoping for governmental disaster relief funds.

While we pray for those who have lost homes to the flooding, some other people have been asking why the government should go in and help people who foolishly built their homes where they knew there was the possibility this could happen. I will not comment on where they built.

But, that same commentary about foolishly building upon sand is made by Jesus in our text. He is not speaking about the foundation of our temporal earthly homes. Jesus want us to recognize our need for a firm foundation for our eternal home, that it is built solely upon that foundation which is none other than Jesus Christ.

To build on a firm foundation, which means we need to watch out for false prophets who would lead us astray, we need to know the truth. To use the excuse, “I do not come to Bible Study because I do not know my Bible very well,” is baffling. I know some have declined attending Bible Study by saying, “The Bible it does not say what I believe, and what want it to say.” That is to claim that God's Word is not going to inform your life. If not God's Word, then what will?

Without putting too sharp a point on it, if Biblical knowledge on our part is lacking, will we be easily lead astray? Of course!

It is amazing how many people process everything they hear which has the name of Jesus Christ attached to it and believe it. They believe that if they talk about Jesus, it must be true. This is foolishly naïve! What is more, Jesus' words in our text proclaim that such belief can have eternally damning consequences.

Today, people consult many other books than the Bible, It looks like such a big book! It appears daunting. But, it is made up of 66 little books. Incredibly, each of those 66 books has the same, one, central theme, salvation in Christ Jesus. Pick one out and read it. Read with eyes looking for God's Christ.

We want a heavenly home, but we do not want to be challenged in our own beliefs. Yes, too many times we have put together our own beliefs, and have made our own personal religion. Unfortunately for many who have done so, their beliefs were not Christian.

How often have people said, “Yeah, I know, I heard the sermon, but I know what I believe.” Where have they gotten their beliefs? From the Word of God? From the world, from the culture, from their heart. Maybe even some pastor proclaiming their own dreams. It certainly was not from the Scripture, yet they want to claim that their belief is Christian.

In Acts, (chapter 17) we learn about the Berean Christians who listened to Paul and then examined the Scriptures to see whether what was said is true. Do not believe something because Pastor Jerabek said it. Believe what Pastor Jerabek says when it agrees with the Scripture.

False prophets try and lead astray. They come out with their thorns and thistles, they may even have their signs and wonders, trying to thrill the masses. Their teachings do not contain faith nourishing food. The Jews in Jesus day wanted those signs and wonders, even demanding them of Jesus to prove who He was.

When such demands were made of Him, Jesus proclaimed He’d give none - except the sign of Jonah. The sign of Jonah was Christ’s coming forth from the belly of the grave on the third day, just as Jonah came forth from the belly of the fish.

Some preachers come with signs and wonders. They want people to look at them in their fancy clothes. They brag about what they can do, how they have built their big congregations. Usually they point to their own works and speak a little about what Jesus accomplished as God’s Christ. Jesus declares what will happen to them and the foolish people who follow them, who were enticed by their words, and who give little concern to the foundation of their eternal home.

How often are we the foolish people? We like to hear nice things that entice us and lure us so that we do not need to give up our security in the world. How foolish are we, spending our time in pursuit of all sorts of things in this world, and when it comes to building a lasting eternal foundation, we sometimes squander what God would graciously give us in Christ Jesus.

Christ is the rock on which Christ builds His church. We are to hear the Words of Christ and put them into practice.

And that Word of Christ is simple:

Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; whosoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven them;

take eat, this is my body;

take drink, this is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you for the remission of sins;

My peace I give to you, not as the world gives.

The firm foundation is Christ alone. When we trust ourselves, or our own works, we build upon sand. While the works of faith will be evident in our lives, Paul declares to us that the foundation of our eternal dwelling is perfect righteousness. Christ is that perfect righteousness. That perfect righteousness is yours as a gift from God, apart from the law, through faith in Christ Jesus, to all who believe.

Perfect righteousness is lived in Christ alone. His perfect righteousness paid for your sinfulness, by His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. We have all sinned, but as Christ commands, we are justified freely – sins are removed by the grace of God, as the atoning sacrifice is applied to us. When the sacrifice is applied to you, you are being built upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

Today’s sermon hymn says it so well, “Built on the rock the church does stand.” Built on the rock! It was and is being built, not by human hands, but by Christ. Christ builds us up as His temple. Christ comes and removes sin, making us holy. Christ gave up His heavenly home to come to us, to redeem us from our empty pursuits of this life. In His blood, we are forgiven our worldly preoccupation with making sure we have the best earthly dwellings while often forgetting to prepare our eternal home.

Christ warns about false prophets, those who rely upon themselves. Earlier in this Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had said, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:20 ESV) No one can meet that perfect demand of righteousness, except God Himself.

Christ was pointing to His own righteousness, His perfect, innocent, holy, sinless righteousness that would be sacrificed upon the cross and distributed to believers.

Yes, even in our sinfulness, by God’s grace, we are built on the rock. That is Christ’s building plan by which He constructs His church. He Himself comes to build His church by Water, word, and meal. In these wonderful means of grace, Christ Himself builds His church upon Himself - the rock.

Did you hear the 6th verse of our hymn? Listen to it again.

Here stands the font before our eyes telling how God did receive us;

The altar recalls Christ’s sacrifice and what His table doth give us;

Here sounds the Word that doth proclaim Christ yesterday, today, the same, yea, and for aye our Redeemer.

United to Christs death and resurrection in the water of baptism – as were Daniel, Kyla, and Matthew on Wednesday evening – you are built on the Rock

You are built on the Rock as Christ gives you His own flesh to eat and His own blood to drink, sealing forgiveness and granting an eternal place in His kingdom.

Christ gives to you the reality of your new condition. He is the Word building you up in the forgiveness He proclaims and delivers to you, which He Himself purchased.

Grant, then, O God, where’er men roam, that, when the church bells are ringing. Many in saving faith may come where Christ His message is bringing; “I know Mine own, Mine own know Me; Ye, not the world, My face shall see. My peace I leave with you.” Amen.

You are built upon the Rock! You are built upon Christ! Live in His peace. In the name of Jesus. Amen.