

Sermon – 10/04/2011 am

Hear and Heed

Study Text: Luke 6:46-49

The cyclone that hit the coast of Queensland recently had devastating effects. You will have seen pictures of houses flattened by the high winds and torrential rain. Reporters focus upon such houses, but in some reports we saw pictures of intact houses next to flattened houses in the same street. Why is this we ask? Why is one house standing and the next flattened? Was the cyclone more powerful at one end of the street than the other? Or was the difference due to the way the house was built? Was one house on firmer foundations than the other? Was one built with more solid material than the other?

As Jesus came to the end of his sermon he used another metaphor to drive home his message, his message about fruit bearing and about hypocrisy. It was a warning message to the crowd gathered before him. He urges them to be doers of his word and not just hearers. He warns of the consequences of failing to do so.

1. But Why?

Before adopting the metaphor, Jesus asks a question of the people. They had come, some from far way, for their sick to be healed and the demon possessed to be delivered. They had come because only Jesus could help them – and help them he did. They came calling out to Jesus ‘Lord, Lord’, ‘Lord have mercy on us’ (6:46). They showed him proper respect and reverence as they came pleading for help. They were ready to do whatever he asked – at least for a while.

The Pharisees were offended by things Jesus said. So were some of the disciples (John 6:61). They found his teaching hard to swallow. Some were afraid to follow Jesus because of the threats of the Pharisees. Others got caught up in the everyday business of life and soon gave up following Jesus.

All had come to Jesus calling him ‘Master’ and ‘Lord’. They used these terms of respect and reverence. Jesus approved of such titles (John 13:13). But what did it mean for people to call him ‘Lord’. Surely someone who is called ‘Lord’ and ‘Master’ should be obeyed.

Jesus told a parable about a man with two sons (Matthew 21:28f). He told his sons to go and work in his vineyard. One said ‘no way’, but later reconsidered and went. The other said ‘sure’ but he never went to work. ‘Which of the two did the will of their father’ asked Jesus. It is not just a matter of hearing. It is hearing and doing the father’s wills that counts.

Calling Jesus ‘Lord’ and promising to follow him is not enough. To do so and yet fail to obey his commands is tantamount to mockery. It is offensive to Jesus. But this is what many do. Jesus said many will come saying ‘Lord, Lord’, and claiming they have prophesied and done many wonders in his name. But Jesus will answer ‘I never knew you’ (Matthew 7:21-23). The only ones Jesus will acknowledge are those who do the will of God; those who hear his word and obey him.

*Out of the fear of God we obey Jesus. You respect your earthly father and fear his wrath. Is it not the same with your heavenly Father and his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? Do not call Jesus ‘Lord’ if you are not going to obey him.

*Out of love we obey Jesus. 'If you love me you will obey my commands' said Jesus (John 15:15). If you know the love of Jesus and how he gave himself to die in your place you will love him, and show that you love him by obeying his commands.

2. Build On Rock

Jesus used a metaphor about building a house to drive home the point of his lesson about hearing and heeding his word. Have you ever been involved in building a house? If so, you will understand just how much work is involved before even the floor of the house is built. You will understand that this is very important work even though it is not seen. You have to dig deep holes and fill these with steel and concrete. Then the brick piers are built on this foundation.

I had to do all this just to add a room at the back of our house. Rather sarcastically I told the engineer these footings would support the whole house. But when storms come with high winds and torrential rain I feel safe knowing that our house has such strong foundations.

In Matthew's gospel we read that the wise man built his house on the rock (Matthew 7:24). Luke tells us that the man dug deep till he found solid rock on which to build. The rock is Christ. He is the only foundation (I Corinthians 3:11). But to say Christ is the foundation means to believe in Christ **and** to obey his commands.

You cannot have the teaching of Christ without having the person of Christ – despite the efforts of Ghandi and many others. Nor can you have the person of Christ without his teaching – despite the antinomian ideas of some in the church. Moralists want the teaching without the person while sentimentalists and antinomians want the person without the teaching.

We hear a lot of sentimental teaching in the church today. Such people love the music and love singing songs about Jesus and his love. They talk about how Jesus helped them become rich and successful. But they do not like Jesus' teaching. They do not like his idea of moral absolutes. They do not like the idea of hardship and suffering as a Christian. Some do not like his teaching about marriage and divorce.

Dig deep into the word of God and use the light of the gospel to examine your heart and life. This is essential if you are to build a life that will withstand whatever troubles and temptations confront you. Jesus says that such things will come. You will face troubles and temptations. Maybe you already have. How did you fare? If you are still worshipping the Lord you have fared well. But do not think that you can relax. Do not let go of the foundations already laid.

'The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak' said Jesus. The devil is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Is your life built on foundations strong enough to resist his temptations? Remember Job. Remember Daniel. Daniels enemies watched him day and night trying to find some fault in his life (Daniel 6). They could not find anything with which to charge him.

Daniel had purposed not to defile himself. He would obey God's word in matters large and small. He built a strong foundation which enabled him to stand firm when his enemies attacked. People who fear God and obey him have nothing to fear in this world – or the next.

3. Build On Sand

Missionaries who go to live among unbelievers in a foreign country must be sure about what they are doing. They will be turning their back upon a comfortable life with family and friends at home. They will face many troubles and temptations.

For this reason mission societies try to assess the likely success of an applicant and prepare them for the work. New believers are told to study the Bible and practice their faith in the local church. Newly marrieds are told to establish their marriage before going. These advisors are usually missionaries themselves who know the difficulties the person will face. They know that any weakness in their faith or practice will be quickly tested and exposed on the field.

It is similar for people wanting to become members of the church. We have church membership by profession of faith. The elders try to help people to know what they believe. It is of course important to call Jesus 'Saviour and Lord'. It is also important to see people doing what Jesus said. It is important to warn people, as Jesus did, against being hearers only and not doers of the word. Those who hear but do not heed the word of Jesus will sooner or later come to grief. They will be like the house built on the sand which fell, *and the ruin of that house was great* (6:49).

In Matthew's gospel we read that the second house was built on the sand. Luke says the man *who heard and did nothing is like a man who built his house on the earth without a foundation* (6:49). The house, and a mighty fine house it may have been, was just sitting on the surface. What would happen to this house when the flood came? When flood waters started swirling around the house it would be undermined. The sand or soft earth would be eroded and the house left exposed. It would collapse and be ruined.

Did you see the houses being carried down the hillside during the floods in Brazil not so long ago? The houses were built without foundations. When the heavy rain brought floods the houses were washed away and many people perished. In the Queensland floods many houses were washed away in the torrent. Those rebuilding will not just be thinking about having a big flash house. Unless they are fools, they will be giving a lot of thought to the foundations of their new house. They will be asking 'will this house withstand another flood?'

Lots of people came to Jesus. They were happy to be healed and delivered of demons. They were happy to be with friends and be part of the crowd. They liked the pleasant words he spoke. They probably said 'what Jesus is saying is true – I just hope my neighbour is listening!' People come to church and enjoy the atmosphere. They enjoy the music and the singing. They enjoy the food and the fellowship – and maybe the gossip!

But they are not so keen on listening to the Bible or the preaching. When they walk out they quickly forget what they heard. They go off home to live as they always have. They go off to work and do their work just like other people. The words they heard did not enter their hearts. There is no difference to the way they live.

Jesus tells us to be doers of the word and not hearers only. James writes the same thing, warning against the bad use of our tongue, and telling us to *visit widows and orphans in their trouble and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world* (James 1:22, 27).

J.C. Ryle writes 'Let it be a fixed principle in our religion, that obedience is the only sound evidence of saving faith, and that the talk of the lips is worse than useless if it is not accompanied by sanctification of life'. He goes on to say in his comments on this passage 'Christianity which combines good profession and good practice is a building that will not fall'.

The flood or torrent in this metaphor refers to troubles and temptations in this present life. But it also refers to Judgement Day. Using a similar metaphor the apostle Paul speaks about our work being tested and revealed on that Day, the Day of Judgment. Indeed, that will be the day of great shaking (6:48). *Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken let us have grace by which*

we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:27-29).

On what foundation is your life built? How are you building on that foundation? Are you on rock, or are you on sand? Are you just a hearer, or are you a doer as well as a hearer, of what God tells us in the Bible? Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21 – read it.

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