

“The Builder”

A builder worked for a general contractor.

Everyone knew him for his quality workmanship.

Whenever the contractor
Had a particularly nice house to build

He would always assign this carpenter
To do the work.

You can drive through the Richmond area
And point out the nice houses this builder built.

But he was getting old
And it was harder and harder for him
To get out of bed in the morning.

Climbing around setting trusses on a 2 story house
Was just getting too tough for him.

He knew it was time to retire.

He told his employer of his plans to retire
To leave the trade he loved.

He told him he wanted to live out his life
In more leisurely ways
With his wife, kids, and grandkids.

He would miss the paycheck
The camaraderie with his co-workers

He would miss the deep sense of satisfaction
He had in plying his trade.

But he was feeling the effects
Of his many years of manual labor

“The Builder”

And he just needed to retire.

His employer was sorry to see him go.

He was a skilled and loyal worker
The best carpenter he had ever hired.

~

His employer sat across the desk from him,
Look at him closely,
And asked the carpenter a question;

“Would you be willing to build one more house for me?”

The carpenter sat there, thought awhile
And reluctantly agreed.

But it was easy to see his heart wasn't in it.

And so as he started to build this new house
You could tell he wasn't into it.

Once he had decided to retire he just wanted out.

Now he found himself building a house
He didn't want to build.

He resorted to shoddy workmanship.

He became sloppy and uncaring
Cut corners wherever he could.

He would arrive late to the worksite in the morning
Take extra long for lunch
And leave before the day was done.

Deadlines weren't met and problems were many.

“The Builder”

It was truly an unfortunate way to end his career.

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Finally, the house was completed,

And the contractor came to inspect the house.

The contractor walked around

Inspecting the exterior and interior of the house.

He noted the sloppy workmanship.

When they returned to the front door

The contractor turned around to the carpenter
And handed the house keys to him.

“This is your house,” he said, “my retirement gift to you.”

~~

What a shock! What a shame!

If only he had known
He was building his own house!

If only he had known it was for him.

Oh, he would have built it all so differently!

Now he owned a home that he was not at all proud of

A home he never would have chosen to live in!

~~

The Scripture Lesson for today

Comes from the closing words of Jesus
In the Sermon on the Mount.

From the beginning of Matthew 5 through chapter 7

Jesus teaches the essence of Christian discipleship
How we are to live as followers of Christ.

“The Builder”

Read it through, carefully and deliberately
For every serious follower of Jesus
Should have a basic understanding
Of what Jesus wants out of our lives.

Jesus closed his sermon with a parable.

The parable concerns two builders
The wise builder and the foolish builder.

Jesus says whoever HEARS these words of mine
And puts them into PRACTICE

Is like the wise builder
Who builds his home on a rock.

The rains came down
The streams rose
And the winds blew

But the house withstood it . . .
Because it was built on a rock.

On the other hand, Jesus says
Everyone who HEARS these words of mine
And does NOT put them into PRACTICE

Is like a foolish builder
Who built his house on sand.

The rains came
The streams rose

And the winds huffed and puffed and blew his house down.

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Our passage ends with Matthew’s closing words

“The Builder”

“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teachings, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of law.”

Jesus summarizes something of tremendous importance.

As Christians, we are to put Jesus’ words into practice.

The Christian faith is a faith of practice.

Theologically, call it orthopraxy . . . right living.

We often hear the term orthodoxy in theology
Meaning, right believing.

But we are to live Christian faith in both . . .
Orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

The Christian faith is not just a set of beliefs
We can verbally spew out when ask.

As our anthem suggests
The world will know Christians by their love.

Or as the founder of our faith, Alexander Mack, said
We will be known by the manner of our living.

~~

Jesus makes this perfectly clear
Earlier in our passage, when he says

Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord
Will enter the kingdom of heaven

BUT only those who DO the will of God in heaven.

That it is as important, in my opinion, more important

“The Builder”

Than the details of what we believe.

Jesus sums this up for us in the Greatest Commandment.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul
And love your neighbor as yourself.
This is not abstract thinking
Or a set of beliefs we uphold and defend.

It is the rubber that hits the pavement.

We need to “talk the talk” . . .
But even more importantly
We need to “walk the walk.”

They will know we are Christians by our love.

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As Christians, we are to embrace the entire Bible.

But we are to place heavier emphasis on the NT
Because the NT centers on the good news of Jesus Christ.

And we should place the greatest emphasis
On Jesus’ own words.

His words to us
In his parables, in his sermons, in his teachings
Are the way, the truth, and the life.

~~

It is not a big thing
But I like my Bible to have Jesus’ words highlighted.

They call this kind of Bible a red-letter addition
Because of the importance
Of having Jesus words being of upmost importance.

~~

“The Builder”

Jesus is the architect for Christian living.

The Bible is our blueprint.

God gave us all the tools necessary
To build our spiritual home
But we are the ones who will build it.

It is up to us to build it according to His design.

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Sometimes, we, build our lives in haphazard ways.

Every thought, every action
Is like a 2x4 in our spiritual home.

Every habit, whether good or bad
Every desire, every deed

Is like a window, doorframe, or floor joist
Well, or badly placed.

Little by little, we build this house
With little thought to how it is built.

Then in shock we look at the spiritual house we built,
Wondering, “Is this the best I could have done?”

~~

And so, think about your house.

We have a house to build.

And we want to build it in such a way
As to have lasting quality to it.

Because there is an eternal quality
To the spiritual houses we build.

“The Builder”

Because as we build our spiritual house here on earth
Our eternal home is being built in heaven.

Many never pay any attention to this.

They build their earthly homes
Without any thought to their spiritual homes.

Each day as we lay the block on our spiritual home
A block is laid in heaven.

Each day as we hammer a nail here on earth
A nail is hammered in heaven.

Each day as we place a board, or erect a wall
The same is done in heaven.

And everyday we build
Is one day closer to completion.

So when our spiritual house is completed on earth
We will move beyond this life
Into our eternal home.

So then, build it wisely
It is the only house you'll live in.