

Matthew 7.21-29
The Builder
WRCoB 2.05.23

A carpenter worked for a building company.

Everyone knew the quality of his workmanship.

Whenever they had a particularly nice house to build
He would be the one assigned to do the work.

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

But he was getting older.

And it was getting 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.

It was time to retire.

He told his employer of his plans.

He'd miss the trade he loved.

But he was feeling the effects
Of many years of manual labor
And just needed to retire.

His employer was sorry to see him go.

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

His employer sat across the desk from him
Look at him closely and asked.

“Can I get you to build just one more house?”

The carpenter sat there, a bit embarrassed
Thought awhile, and reluctantly agreed.

But you could tell his heart wasn’t in 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 arrived late and left early.

Deadlines weren’t met and problems were many.

It was an unfortunate way to end his career.
~

Finally, the house was completed.

The building contractor came to inspect the house.

He noted the sloppy workmanship.

When they returned to the front door
The employer turned around to the carpenter
And handed the house keys to him.

“This is your house,” he said, “my retirement gift to you.”
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If only he'd known.

Now he owned a home he wasn't at all proud of
A home he never would have chosen to live in!

Matthew 7:24 CEB

24 “Everybody who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise builder who built a house on bedrock.

~~

The Scripture Lesson for today
Comes from the closing words
Of Jesus' 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.

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 closes his sermon with a parable.

The parable is about two builders.

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

Is like a wise builder
Who built his house on a rock.

The rains came down
The streams rose
And the winds blew

But the house stood through it all

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.

It reminds me of the images

Of the houses along the beaches of Florida.

So much capital crumbling into the sea.

~~

Jesus tells his disciples, if they want to follow him

They must put his words into practice.

Contrary to popular belief

The Christian faith is an action faith.

Theologically it's called

Orthopraxy, the understanding that right action is as important as religious belief.

We hear the term orthodoxy in theology

Meaning, right believing.

But Jesus tells us we are to live out our faith.

That faith is not a set of beliefs

We verbally spew when asked.

Our lives are a living witness of our faith.

As the founder of our faith, Alexander Mack, said

*How will the Brethren be known?
By the manner of our living.*

Or as the great song sings

They'll know we are Christians by our Love.

~~

Sometimes, we build our lives in haphazard ways.

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

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

Is like a window, doorframe, or floor joist
Properly or improperly placed.

And little by little, we build this house
With little thought to how it's being built.

Then in shock we look at the life we built
Wondering, "Is this the best I could have done?"

~~

Richard S. Halverson, Presbyterian minister
And former U.S. Senate Chaplain
Used a similar image.

*You're going to meet an old man or woman someday down
the road—ten, thirty, fifty years from now—waiting there for
you. You'll be catching up with him or her. What kind of an
old person will you meet?*

That person may be a seasoned, soft, gracious person—a gentle man or woman who has grown old gracefully, surrounded by hosts of friends, friends who call them blessed because of what their life has meant to them.

Or the person may be a bitter, disillusioned, dried-up old buzzard without a good word for anyone—soured, friendless, and alone.

That person will be you. They'll be the composite of everything you do, say, and think—today and tomorrow.

Columbia researcher Sheena Iyengar has found
That the average person
Makes about 70 decisions every day.

I challenge the number of decisions she claims
But the point is clear

70 daily decisions make up 25,500 decisions in a year.

And over 70 years, that's 1,788,500 decisions.

Each decision you make is a piece of lumber
In the house you are building

Albert Camus said,

Life is a sum of all your choices.

If it is true we average 70 decisions daily
Then put all of those 1,788,500 choices together
And that's who you are.

~~
We all 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 earthly houses we build.

Because as we build our 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 eternal homes.

Each day as we lay the block on our house on earth
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 every day we build
Is one day closer to completion.

And when our earthly house is finished on earth
Our heavenly home is completed

My sisters and brethren, build it wisely
It is the only house you'll live in.

~~
And if you are like me, reaching the golden years
Our houses are almost completed

And you might want to say, here it is
It is what it is.

I can't change what I've built.

I've caught up with the old man down the road

C. S. Lewis writes in his book, *Mere Christianity*

Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing.

He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised.

But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to?

The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards.

You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself."

Let Jesus be the architect
And let the Bible be the blueprints
Of your earthly and spiritual home.

For he is the rock and foundation of our salvation.

Matthew 7:28-29 NLT

28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.