

**Sunday Sermonettes: September 10, 2017**

**Introduction: The Church Built on the Rock**

Jesus told a parable about a wise and a foolish man who built houses. The wise man built his house on the strong foundation of a rock. The foolish man built his house on the shifting foundation of sand. When the rains fell, the house built on sand was swept away while the house built on the rock stood strong.

Jesus was a carpenter by trade, but he was giving us building advice of a different sort. He was talking about faith which is built on a solid foundation, on the rock of God's Word. A faith which trusts in him and him alone for all we need.

Jesus told this parable to keep our hearts and minds close to him. Since this parable tells believers to be built on the solid foundation of Jesus it is also telling the church to be built there as well because God's people make up God's church.

When a group of believers builds on the foundation that God has given in his Word, this church will grow strong in the Lord. They will be able to stand against persecutions caused by false doctrine, the world around us, and temptation. However, when believers choose to set aside parts of God's Word, change it, or modify it in any way. Then they are foolish builders, building on some other foundation which is not the rock of the Word.

Last week, we heard God call out to all people, to be part of his house, his Church. This week we look at what the church is built on. In each of our sermonettes, we will hear God teach us about his church and what it is built on. The church is built on the Rock, of our Savior Jesus Christ. We will see the church of God is built on God's promise, on faith which trusts in Jesus alone, and the church endures by continuing to stand on the Rock.

**Sermonette I: The Church built on the Rock : Is Built on the Promises of God**

**Joshua 4: 1-9**

The Old Testament people were monument builders. They built monuments for the same reasons we do; to commemorate important places or events. They would often build these monuments out of stones.

There were a lot of good reasons to build these monuments out of stones. The monument would have been visible. In the Mediterranean landscape, a group of stones that are set up in an orderly way stands out against the landscape.

The monument would last. Those stones weren't just thrown into piles, they were built in a specific way and pattern. Unless that structure was pushed over, the weight of the stones would continue to hold it together even in the midst of storms or winds or rains.

There are many times that these monuments were built. Noah built an altar out of stones on Mt. Ararat when he came out of the ark to worship and thank God. That altar commemorated God's promise of protection and preservation. Abram built an altar of stone to the Lord when the Lord brought him to the land of Canaan and gave it to him and his family. When Jacob was running from his brother Esau, he set up a stone at Bethel to commemorate the covenant promises that God made to him in the dream. And here in our first lesson we see a monument, an altar being built, to commemorate the Lord fulfilling his promises and bringing his people out of Egypt to the promised land.

These monuments were supposed to be living sign posts to teach the people the love and promises of their God. When people would be passing by, they would have a moment to pause and think about the promises of God and his love in carrying them out. When their children would ask what the monument was about, they were to stop and explain to them the love of the LORD.

These monuments were built to be reminders, not of the people's achievements, but of God's. They were set up to be a reminder that God loved them, that God protected them, that God made promises to them, and that God was fulfilling those promises.

The Old Testament church was not built on the accomplishments of people. It was not built on what Abraham, David, Samson, or anyone else accomplished. The Old Testament church was built on the promises that the LORD had made to them and how he continued to be faithful in carrying out his promises to his people.

It was the LORD who led Abraham to Canaan and promised that he would make his family a great nation. It was the LORD who promised that he would give the Israelites the land of Canaan. And it was the

LORD who brought the Israelites out of Egypt and gave them Canaan as he said he would. The Old Testament church was built on the LORD's greatest promise to his people. He promised them he would send a Messiah to save his people.

The church built on the rock is the church which is built on the promises of God. All of these promises that God made and fulfilled in the Old Testament show us God's faithfulness. He promised something and he carried through with it, he did what he said he would do. God has made many promises to you and me, but the most important promise he made to us, he has also fulfilled for us in Jesus.

Through Jesus, God fulfilled the promise that his Old Testament church was built on. He promised to take away the sins of the world. Through Jesus, God has brought that forgiveness to sinners like you and me, he has delivered us from death and some day heaven will be ours. This promise of heaven is secure because Jesus has suffered and died and is risen again. And because he has risen, we will rise too.

The church built on the rock is a church that is built on the promises our God has made and that he has fulfilled through Jesus. We read about a monument to God's promises and his faithfulness in our first lesson from Joshua chapter 4.

**When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup> "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, <sup>3</sup> and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight."**

**<sup>4</sup> So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, <sup>5</sup> and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, <sup>6</sup> to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' <sup>7</sup> tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."**

**<sup>8</sup> So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the LORD had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down. <sup>9</sup> Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day.**

## Sermonette II: The Church Built on the Rock: Is Built on the Faith which the Holy Spirit works Matthew 14:13-20

When we confess our faith at the beginning of the service or when we use the creeds, what are we doing? Why do we do that? Isn't faith a personal thing?

There are many aspects of faith which are personal, but faith is far from a personal thing. The Bible tells us to come together to worship him. It tells us to stand up for what we believe and to confess that faith freely among people. The apostle Paul says **"...If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."**

In our Gospel for this morning Jesus is asking his disciples to take a stand and confess what they believe. He says, **"Who do you say I am?"**

Jesus and his disciples were in the city of Caesarea Philippi. This city was known for its mixture of many different Greek gods and religions. There were temples, beautiful ornate gardens, waterfalls and rock structures that were dedicated to the worship of this or that god.

It is here amidst all of these beautiful monuments to false gods that Jesus takes a moment to ask his disciples. Who is the real God? Who is the real Savior? Look around you, is it one of these? Is it one of these that is represented in these places? Who do people say I am? More importantly, **"Who do you say I am?"**

Jesus wouldn't let any of his disciples hide from this question and he won't let us either. This is not a multiple choice question. There is only one answer that Jesus is looking for, one answer that will satisfy the question.

The grace of God goes beyond our understanding. This grace of God that works faith in our hearts is amazing. The first flame of faith was not created by us, it was created by the Holy Spirit as he worked through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

As that flame of faith grew, it was not us who fanned the flames and tended them, it was the Holy Spirit who made that faith grow and blossom. It was the Holy Spirit who strengthened that faith which believes in Jesus as our Savior.

It is through the faith which the Holy Spirit worked in Peter that he was able to answer Jesus' question and gives a confession of faith, **"You are the Christ the Son of the Living God."** You are the Son of God, the Savior.

This same Holy Spirit works saving faith in our hearts too. He brings us to himself, builds us up in faith, and keeps us in that faith.

Jesus our Savior is the rock upon which this church is built. We can only make that statement, that confession of faith in Jesus as the Rock of our salvation, through the faith which the Holy Spirit works.

The church built on the Rock is built on faith in Jesus which the Holy Spirit works. It is only through Jesus that we are saved. This was the truth that Peter and the disciples confessed. The Old Testament believers confessed their faith in the Messiah who would come to save them. We confess the same faith in our Savior as these believers did. Jesus is the Rock on which the Holy Spirit builds the church .

Who do you say I am?

You are the Christ the Son of the Living God.

*Please rise as we read our Gospel for this morning*

<sup>13</sup> **When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"**

<sup>14</sup> **They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."**

<sup>15</sup> **"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"**

<sup>16</sup> **Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**

<sup>17</sup> **Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup> Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.**

**Sermonette III: The Church Built on the Rock: Endures because it Continues to Stand on the Rock  
Ephesians 2: 19-22**

It's very easy to say that other people don't continue to stand on the rock of God's Word. It's easy to see how other church bodies have allowed God's Word to slip away from them. It's easy to look at society and to shake our heads at the lack of god-pleasing lifestyles, morals, and ethics. Yet, we are part of this sinful world too. We are just as guilty of sidestepping God's Word for our own purposes and personal pleasures as others are.

We have thrown out God's Word for our own rationalizations about what God's Word should say, or what we want it to say. It's not just other people who are guilty of following another truth, we are also guilty of trading the truth of the rock of Christ for the shifting sand of some other teaching.

The apostle Paul tells us that for the church to endure, we, God's people who make up his church, must continue to stand on that rock. **You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to**

**become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.**

For the church to endure it is not good enough that we once went to a church that taught God's Word. It is not good enough that we were members at a church that has a heritage in the truth of Scripture. It is not good enough that our denomination has been around for hundreds of years.

For the church built on the rock to endure, it must continue to stand on the rock of Jesus. It must continue to preach the full council of God, the Law and the Gospel of Christ. This Word of God, is not built on the shifting sands of man's teaching, the changing views of society, or our own sinful urges or emotions, it is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone.

The truth of Christ is the only message that releases us from the chains of sin and allows us to live a life of joy and happiness. The truth of Christ's suffering and death on the cross is the only message that leads to the victory of heaven.

Christ is the Rock on which the church is built. By God's grace the church will endure. May we continue to pray that the Holy Spirit keeps us firm in the Word and in the faith, firmly standing on the rock of our salvation, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.