

Build Your House Upon The Rock

Matthew 7:24-27, Trinity Sunday IV

July 9, 2006

Beloved of the Lord....In our lesson today Jesus spoke of a house that is built upon either sand or a rock. In the news we often see pictures of various houses which have been destroyed by one means or another. Sometimes we see houses that are ripped apart by tornadoes. Sometimes a house by a river is flooded and it is a total loss. In California they often have mudslides which completely bury a house. Then there are devastating floods like Katrina where we only see the roof of a house because the water is so high. Every once in a while we see a house on the East Coast which hangs on the brink of a cliff ready to fall into the ocean. The ocean beneath has pounded away the sandy soil it was built upon.

With this background we see the picture which Jesus provides for us this morning is for the benefit of our eternal souls. For if we build our faith upon the sinking sands of good works, when death or judgment comes we will be ruined like a house that sinks in the sand. Faith that is built upon good works or good deeds in life cannot weather the storm of God's righteous wrath. On the other hand, faith which is built upon the merits of Christ is well able to weather any storm. When our faith is in Christ, He is the Rock of our salvation. Then the multitude of our sins will not harm us, nor the many arrows which Satan shoots at us. Indeed faith built upon the Rock of Christ can withstand anything this world throws at us, for Christ is stronger than all. His righteousness freely given through the cross covers the multitude of our sins, like a coat or cloak. His righteousness makes us clean, white, and bright in the eyes of God. Through Him we shall not be moved. When all of your hope and confidence is in Christ Jesus, you are that safe and secure house built upon a Rock. You are safe and secure in the arms of your Good Shepherd Jesus.

I. Good works cannot save a single soul. But to illustrate this point better, picture if you will an escalator which is continually going down. To our surprise, instead of seeing people using it to go down, we see many people furiously trying to use it to go up to the top floor. Quickly they climb up the stairs as fast as they can go, but the faster they step, the quicker the escalator takes them down! In fact, no matter how quickly they try to climb those stairs, the escalator is always faster! This picture of an escalator and the people on it, is a picture of all the people in this world who are trying to reach heaven by their own good works. Each step the people take is a single good work. The more steps people take, the more good works they do. The top floor represents heaven, and the bottom floor represents hell. To be on the escalator is to live in this world.

But the problem is that no matter how hard a man may try to earn his way into heaven by good works, it cannot be done. For the sins of man only take man in the downward direction. And even when a man really does something good, and says to himself, "That was a really good thing I did today", his own vanity cancels out whatever good he thinks he has done. And so we see the more a man tries to earn heaven by his good works before a righteous, holy, and sinless God, the deeper such a man digs himself into debt. For anyone who thinks that heaven can be earned by the sinful and unclean "good" works, such only earn God's wrath. Therefore man by nature, by sinful nature, only digs himself deeper and deeper into the hole. Its just like the man on the escalator. The faster he tries to take those steps up to the top floor, the faster he goes down to the bottom. The Bible says, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." Good works or deeds cannot justify even one soul in the sight of a perfectly righteous God who demands absolute perfection from every living soul! God also threatens to punish all that transgress His commandments. In one stroke, in one passage, God condemns all mankind saying, "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Rom. 3:12

Let us consider the fifth commandment in this regard. God commands, *Thou shalt not kill*. What does this mean? *We should fear and love God that we may not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.* In this commandment God shows how valuable each human life is. Our own life is a gift from God which we are to use to His glory. Our life is not our own but it belongs to Him. In this commandment God forbids murder and suicide. Those who commit suicide are lost for all eternity for there is no opportunity for repentance. Those who murder will be damned as well, unless they repent and seek forgiveness by way of Jesus Christ. In this commandment then we see how sacred and precious human life is, and how we should do nothing to hurt or harm our neighbor for whom Christ has died. Mothers who abort their own children will face an angry judge on Judgment Day except they repent. In this commandment we should also remember that to hate is to murder. Just because we have not pulled the trigger with our finger does not mean we have not pulled the trigger with our heart.

Therefore we dare not say we've never broken the fifth commandment. We are all guilty before the just and righteous God. Rather what we all should say is "God be merciful to me a sinner." For when we are condemned and found wanting, when we see that no matter how hard we try to step up to the top of the escalator, we find ourselves sinking more quickly to the bottom, all we can do is cast ourselves down before the mercy seat of Christ! Our only hope of salvation then is God's mercy, and not

our works! Thanks be to God there is abundant mercy in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Our God is a merciful and gracious God! The prophet Nehemiah says, "Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Neh. 9:17 Even our own mountain of debt and sin is cancelled out by the abundant merits of our Savior. The Bible says, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Rom. 5:20 And "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart." I Jn 3:20

II. Which escalator are you on? Returning now to the picture of the escalator, let us add a second escalator to the picture. Unlike the first escalator, this second escalator is constantly going up. Unlike the first, the people on this escalator do not need to continually step up in hopes of reaching the top. In fact they can stand still, and do nothing to reach the top, for they know they are on the right escalator. The people on this escalator are the Christians. They are going up, without any effort of their own, for Christ is there standing at the top, just like the vision of Jacob's ladder. Christ is the one who enables this escalator to bring the people up to heaven. The Christians go in the upward direction because their faith is in the power of Christ, and not in their own good works. Their house is built upon the Rock of Jesus Christ. Their foundation is sure and certain. And truly, they must do nothing at all in order to reach the top. Christ will safely bring them to the top floor of heaven!

And so in the picture of two escalators, we have a picture of the whole world, believers and unbelievers alike. For contrary to popular belief there are only two religions in this world. One religion teaches that man by his own good works must bring himself to heaven. This is like the Amish who do not wear colorful clothing, or the Mormons who will not drink alcohol or smoke. This is like the Jews who refuse to eat pork. But truly all of these religions are the same. They are a house that is built upon sinking sand. No matter how quickly they try to step up to the top floor, the escalator they are on continually brings people down. Thanks be to God there is another religion, the True Religion, the religion of Jesus Christ. This is a religion of free grace. This is the house which is built upon a Rock, its foundation being sure. This religion teaches that all mankind is saved by the mercy and glorious salvation of Jesus Christ. This religion teaches what the Bible teaches, namely that heaven is a free gift for all who stop trying to earn their way into heaven. The people on this escalator have learned to forsake their own works, and instead trust in the merits of Christ Jesus. This is the religion of all those on the "up" escalator. Of these people on this "up" escalator Jesus said, "I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and

beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." You see those on this "up" escalator are confident of their own salvation. For their faith is not in themselves or their own supposed works, but their faith is in God, namely in Christ Jesus. In Christ they see their own source of salvation. They see that He paid for their own sins with His own blood! As for their own lack of good works, they see that all the good works that Jesus did are placed into their own account. Whereas the people on the "down" escalator are still under the delusion that each step brings them closer to the top floor, those on the "up" escalator know well that Christ has done all good works for them. He has fulfilled the law in their stead, in their place. They know Jesus to be their substitute in every way. Those on the "up" escalator by faith are always thankful for Christ has redeemed them from all sin.

III. Those on the Rock can weather any storm. In our last picture for this morning let us again return to the house which is built upon the rock. We remember that in the news we often see houses which are devastated by tornadoes, hurricanes, or even those houses which are perched on a cliff ready to fall into the sea. In our Bibles this morning we are reminded by Christ to build our faith, our house upon Him, for He is a Rock. If our faith is in His righteousness and not our own, our faith is secure, it will not go anywhere. The storm clouds may gather and downpour upon us. There may be hail which can indeed cause great damage to our "house", but such powers cannot touch the soul which rests upon Christ. Faith that is built upon Him will always be secure. Even when death and hell threaten us, or when our adversary casts our sins in our face, or when the trials and tribulations become so difficult that we only wish to flee, Christ is still our priceless treasure, a very present refuge in time of need. It is Christ Jesus that is the source of all believer's strength. He is a Rock, our Rock. We are secure when we trust in His righteousness and not our own. And so even though this world may beat and batter us like heavy rains and hail upon a house, we shall not be moved, for we have Christ our Champion. We can joyfully say "He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my defence; I shall not be greatly moved." Ps. 62:2 Let the devil come as he may, he can harm us none. Our salvation in Christ Jesus is secure, and even Satan himself must and will bow before Christ on the Day of Judgment. Therefore beloved of the Lord, do not fear, God will not permit you to be moved. Your salvation is always secure in Christ. Trusting In Him, you stand upon the escalator which only goes in the upward direction. By the grace and mercy of God, you will reach the top floor. Amen.

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