

The Rock – Building a House for Storm and Calm

Thomas Robinson, *Fear, Faith, & Love* 4, September 4, 2016

Matthew 7:24-29 (Cf. Luke 6:47-49)

²⁴ "Everyone then who **hears these words of mine and does them** will be like a **wise man** who built his **house on the rock**.

²⁵ And the **rain** fell, and the **rivers** rose, and the **winds** blew and **beat on that house**, but **it did not fall**, because it had been **founded on the rock**.

²⁶ And everyone who **hears** these words of mine and **does not do them** will be like a **foolish man** who built his **house on the sand**.

²⁷ And the **rain** fell, and the **rivers** rose, and the **winds** blew and **beat against that house**, and **it fell**, and **its collapse was complete**."

²⁸ And when **Jesus finished these words**, the crowds were **astonished** at his **teaching**, ²⁹ for he was **teaching** them as one who had **authority**, and not as their scribes.

Matthew 5:43-45, 48

⁴⁵ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, **Love your enemies** and pray for those who oppress you,⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ...⁴⁸ You therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

1 John 4:16-18a

¹⁶ So we have come to know and to trust the love (agapé) that God has lodged in us. God is love, and whoever abides in that love is abiding in God, and God is abiding in them.¹⁷ In this the love has been brought to completion with us, so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.¹⁸ No fear exists in this love, but rather this complete love throws fear outside.

John 15:9-12

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.¹² This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

John 16:33

³³ "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Ephesians 2:20-22

²⁰ [You are] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:11-16

¹¹ He himself also gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of the Messiah,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature adult, to a measure of stature of the fullness of the Messiah. ...¹⁵ that, by practicing the truth in love, we may grow up in every way into him who is the head, the Messiah,¹⁶ from whom the whole body (carefully joined together and held together by every ligament of support when each one of the parts is working as it should) creates the body's growth for building itself up in love.

Matthew 14:28-32

²⁸ And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹ He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he became fearful, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you waver?” ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Learning to Build: Hearing and Doing Jesus Words

We’ve talked about fear, anxiety, and love. Now let’s think together about building. Jesus uses the image of two builders as the climax of the Sermon on the Mount. One person hears Jesus’ words and does them. Another hears and does not do them. He says it’s the difference between a house founded in bedrock and one sitting on sand. The fearsome storms hit both. One stands. The other collapses. “Doing” Jesus’ words is the difference! How? Is this Grace?

This “doing” is not “earning;” it is participating: Jesus’ words / life become my own real life.

It reflects our unity as embodied creatures (as Jesus came in body) uniting mind and action.

Doing also changes the way we hear: Hearing a chef’s recipe on TV or really cooking the dish.

We come to know and trust God’s love in Jesus, abide in it, complete that love – boldness!

It’s a process: We hear and do. We listen again; we do more. We abide, grow, share life.

Jesus knew that this is hard for us. He was both insistent and patient with “little-faith” disciples.

In his sermon Jesus shows a transformed way of thinking and acting. So many of the ways we think to protect or secure our life-houses are actually sand or storm. We increase life’s fears.

It’s personal building and community building. Each of us has fears, struggles that we and God know. We are individually beloved by God. But we thrive only as part of a larger whole.

We share in Jesus’ life and thus in each other’s life, experience, challenge, support, burdens.

The Doing that Makes Us Solid

Most of our basic practice is multi-sided: Worship, Daily study/meditation, Small group, Ministry.

Think of being here: physically, connecting with diverse people, singing these words, praying, sharing communion, reflecting deeply, learning from scripture, practicing generosity, teaching children, sharing life, bad and good, deepening friendship, experiencing the presence of God.

In personal meditation and study we nourish our life. We open our minds/hearts to God’s love seen in Jesus; to the long story of God’s faithfulness. We reflect on our own life, growth, and brokenness. We listen. Wait upon the Lord. We quiet our bodies from the anxieties of life in times of solitude, rest, prayer, fasting. We abide. Train our hearts in gratitude. Release anger, control, judgment. We learn to see God everywhere, to trust God boldly. Laugh at ourselves.

The Doing that Builds Our World

Jesus calls us to share God’s vulnerable embodied love, even to enemies. But we seek safety.

Start with those close to us and move outward. Self-giving love flows outward. Like Jesus we practice genuinely honoring and seeing others – even/especially those very different from ourselves. Listening to them, learning their lives as God’s beloved. Breaking down fears.

We practice hospitality, welcoming the stranger. We learn to look across society’s barriers and build friendship, mutual service, shared grace. Ethnicity, class, financial, racial, gender, etc.

We celebrate the wonder of God’s diverse, complicated creation. We undermine anxieties.

We do forgiveness and seek reconciliation! No revenge, anger, control. We’re forgiven forgivers.

We learn people’s pain and seek relief, justice, renewal for those wronged / oppressed.

We build a loving, welcoming community to help each other experience God’s transforming love and grow into full, mature people living boldly and fearlessly in this challenging world.