

What Are You Building?
Matthew 7:24-27

Just a few years before I was born, the members of Peace Lutheran Church decided to start up a Christian Grade School. And as I understand, that grade school officially started in the lower level of church...with just one teacher...then two teachers. In 1969, there was a groundbreaking ceremony. Now, remember, this part of Hartford was not built up like it is today. Peace Lutheran Church was one of the only buildings this far north. All of a sudden construction equipment appeared and holes were dug and concrete was poured and men in hard hats. I wonder how many people in the community asked, "What are you building over there?" And Peace members could say: "We're building a Christian School. So our kids can learn math, science, and history...and best of all, so they can hear God's Word 5 days a week."

Do you know that school is going to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2018? A lot has changed over these five decades. Our campus has seen numerous building projects and renovations. In fact, the biggest and most important building project is underway right now. It is? I don't see any shovels or hard hats. Whether we know it or not...whether we've ever even thought about it or not, each one of us is building something. The question is, What Are We Building?

That brings us to our Gospel for today. Jesus introduces us to two builders. One builder is called a **wise** man. He did a careful search and found the perfect spot to build. It was rock...it was solid...it would be a good foundation. And it paid off. The storms came...the winds blew...and his house remained standing. Those who LISTEN to God's Word and LOVE God's Word and LIVE God's Word are like this wise builder.

The other is called a **fool**. He knew there would be storms. He knew a solid foundation was important. But for some reason – maybe he was lazy...maybe he just liked the view – he decided to build on the sand. And the storms did eventually come and his house fell with a great crash. Those who hear the Word of God, but treat it like background noise...they hear it but they don't put it into practice...they are foolish like this builder.

So what are we building? Disciples, right? Didn't our Lord tell us to go and make disciples? It starts here at home and then it spreads outward. So here at home, it is our primary goal to raise up our families to LISTEN to the Word of God...to LOVE it...and the LIVE it. That's why we have a Lutheran Elementary School. That's why we have Sunday School classes. You could think of the nurturing of disciples and the instruction of our youth as one of the most important ongoing building projects we have here at Peace. But for the next few moments, I want you moms and dads and grandmas and grandpas to think about your own personal building projects. How passionate are you about LISTENING to and LOVING and LIVING the Word of God?

- Please don't raise any hands, but how many of you are 100% certain you could recite the 1st Commandment? How about the 6th Commandment? Or the 8th?
- Again, don't raise any hands, but how many of you could give me one or two Bible passages that clearly lay out the blessings of Baptism?
- If you were handed a Bible, how many of you could find a few passages that highlight Verbal Inspiration, Close Communion, and speak about fathers having the awesome responsibility of being the spiritual leaders in the home?

I don't bring any of this up to make anyone feel bad, but to raise some awareness. When I was a high school student and in my 4th year of Latin, I could conjugate dozens and dozens of regular and irregular verbs and decline maybe hundreds of nouns. Now, almost 30 years later and having very little contact with Latin, I've lost all of it. LISTENING to the Word and LOVING the Word is important. We don't want to lose it. We don't want precious Bible facts and life-giving Bible passages to slip away like never-used Latin words. We don't want it ever to become background noise. But LIVING that Word is also important. So please follow me one step further. Moms and Dads and Grandmas and Grandpas – your life is one of the most useful textbooks your children and grandchildren will ever use. Let me give you some examples:

- How many of us have ever taken our children to Walmart on a Saturday and carefully showed them how to shoplift without getting caught? We'd never do that. That would be a breaking of the 7th Commandment. We wouldn't want our children to be thieves. Do we feel as strongly about the 3rd Commandment? Are we just as adamant and just as passionate about making sure we and our children - our teenagers and high school and college-aged children are making it to God's house every week and receiving his holy supper as often as it is served?
- We do our best as parents to make sure our children are respectful...to us and to other elders. After all, the 4th Commandment would have them *honor their fathers and mothers*. Parents generally like the 4th Commandment. But are we as passionate about the 8th Commandment? That's the one that protects the reputation and good name of our neighbor. That's the commandment that forbids gossiping and rumors and talking behind backs.
- Parents, how much Christian Education is completely undone because moms and dads aren't living the Lord's lessons at home. That doesn't even make sense, does it? And I guess that's why Jesus calls it foolish...foolish to build on sand...foolish to hear the Word of God, but fail to put it into practice.

My point is this: Hearing and Listening to the Word of God is not just for kids – as if it's what our children do until they hit the 8th grade and get confirmed. All of us have been asked by our Lord to continue building up our faith...and that comes from hearing the message. And a constantly growing faith will not just LISTEN but it will also LOVE and LIVE the Words of Christ.

I think together we have stood on the beach...on the sand. Together we can admit that we've missed opportunities to grow in the Word...we haven't been consistent examples for our children...together we've stood in the sand of messed up priorities and spiritual laziness. You'd think the Lord would just send a big ol' tidal wave that would sweep us all away.

He does indeed send a tidal wave of anger and wrath and punishment – but that came crashing down on Jesus. That wave took him right into the eye of the storm...to the cross. And he endured that storm until it was finished. There is a wave for you and me too...it doesn't crush us, it covers us like a warm blanket...it doesn't carry us away, it cleanses us...it doesn't smash us to pieces, it heals us. That's the wave of our baptism. That's the flood of forgiveness that washes over us and in us when we gather around his holy table.

It's good to hear that, isn't it? It's good to hear that God loves us and forgives us. We LOVE to LISTEN to that message. May God move you to listen more and more. And may he give you true wisdom...so that you also LIVE his Word. God bless your ongoing building project. Amen.