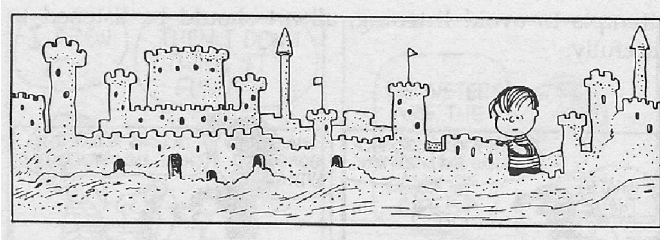


IS YOUR HOME BUILT ON ROCK OR BUILT ON SAND?



We all live downstream.

'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.' – Matthew 7

THE PARABLE ABOUT WATER

The title of this parable is the house built upon rock. However, this parable is not about rocks or sands, it is about the affects of hurricane driven water.

We love to read the story Jesus tells about the rock, and the house and the sure foundation. (This story is also found in Luke 6.) He says if the foundations are shaky, then the house will be too. Jesus' meaning connects what we say with what we do. Others see in this parable that question of what do we pass on to others?

So let's start with water.

WE ALL LIVE DOWNSTREAM.

FIRST, LITERALLY: LET'S BE LITERAL.

Do you know where the water comes from that waters the lawn in front of the church?

The Church of the Roses is part of a well distribution system. Our outdoor water comes from a well. I am told that the water table is so high in our neighborhood, that you can hand dig your own well about five to ten feet down.

How about the water that you drink in your coffee?

It comes from the tap of course. And that comes from the Peter Spring Well – Standby. Our city sources also include groundwater and water from rivers.

And it is vulnerable to petroleum pollution, dry cleaning pollution,

There is a recent study that questions whether or not a child could be exposed to Trichloroethylene (TCE) poisoning if he drank from the water fountain at Steele Lane Elementary School. (By the way, the conclusion was that drinking well water is not a hazard.)

AND WHERE DOES OUR WATER GO?

It goes down the drain, of course, and then to the treatment facilities at the Laguna which are some of the finest in the country. From there it goes... well, think about it.

So I have three things to say about fresh water. First, we all live down stream, physically.

SECOND, WE ALL LIVE DOWNSTREAM GENETICALLY.

You are a product of the genetics of your parents and grandparents, and your children live downstream from you. When I see our daughter all dressed up in a power business suit heading into the corporate offices of Sutter Healthcare, I think she's looking pretty good.

When I see the grandchildren bite off the head of a lizard, I think, "Where did these children come from?"

The study of the human genome will yield new treatments for disease by altering genetics rather than introducing a dead virus. That will change everything.

Did you get good genes? Mostly? We can answer that question more precisely than we used to, and the ability to modify our genes is key to our survival. Do you believe in evolution? It doesn't matter if you do, just pray that your doctor does.

**THIRD,
WE ALL LIVE DOWN STREAM SPIRITUALLY.**

Of course that is the point of the scripture.

Build your spiritual home on a solid foundation, so that what you pass on to others will withstand the torrents of change and uncertainty, and will provide strength when everything around them is changing.

Anyone who has been reading the newspaper this week knows why we need a strong faith and a strong church family.

People tell us how we need to be adapting our church to a changing world, and we certainly do. But when the world around us is in upheaval, then you better hope that you are not part of a "flavor of the month club" kind of church.

Scripture: Matthew 7: 24-27

Rocks and Sands

24. 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise person who built his house on rock.
25. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.
26. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish person who built his house on sand.
27. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell - and great was its fall!

THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

I found an interesting article by a Catholic author in defense of his church. I thought this might be important to us to remember as we turn to our church for support in difficult times.

By Chris Sparks:

I cannot count how often I've come across the phrase "institutional religion" in the course of my reading and discussions about faith. A great

number of people seem to be allergic to it. Some call it repressive; a great evil. They claim it prevents true faith, prohibits genuine expressions of spirituality, and hinders people from finding God. In the face of such a reputation, why on earth am I a member of the religious institution par excellence: the Catholic Church?

I am a member of the Catholic Church because I believe her to be more than just an earthly organization, more than just one way Christians on earth can get together to pray and worship. I believe in the promise given by Christ to St. Peter (Matthew 16:13-20). Peter is the Rock, the foundation, upon which Christ built His Church. There you have a mighty statement: Christ built a Church.

Christ built a Church. ... He did not build an invisible Church. He built a Church on St. Simon, called Peter - the rock. ...He said wise men build their houses on rocks, not on sand - not on a numberless group. You do not see Christ endorsing democracy in his Church. You do not see an encouragement of every individual person being an equal part of the foundation of this Church. That sort of Church will erode away. The little grains of sand, each autonomous, each an individual, each interested in their own self actualization as equal parts of the foundation of the Church, will be easily washed away in a storm and blown around in every wind of doctrine.

PETER

Peter was a weak, flawed man. Many of his successors, the bishops of Rome, have been weak, flawed men. However this rock's strength doesn't come from the man holding the office.

Has God gone mad? What was Christ thinking, giving the keys of the asylum to one of the inmates?

AN INSTITUTION THAT SHALL NOT FAIL IN THE FACE OF HUMAN SINFULNESS

Here, ultimately, is why we need a Church, and why we need the Catholic Church. Absent an institution founded by the grace and power of God, with the guarantee that it shall never fail in the face of human sinfulness, mankind could not pass the means for salvation, the avenues for grace, from one generation to the next. The truth would be lost in the storms of the devil on the seas of the world. Indeed, one other metaphor for the Church is as a great ship, a vessel on a voyage towards the land of the living.

HOUSES ON THE SAND

I doubt that there are many people who like to see houses that are built on sand destroyed, particularly when we see the windswept beaches of eastern Texas upon which only one house remains standing. If a person uses this lesson to say that this proves that God wants some people to prosper while others suffer, they have lost the meaning Christ intended. To wish other people ill, and to say it is God's will so that we can think of ourselves as healthy is pathological.

That is certainly not the lesson that Jesus hoped to impart to his disciples.

There is a similar landscape south of Lake Tahoe that I saw last week, except that the enemy was fire, not water. Houses are being rebuilt on foundations that remain, but all around them are the charred remains of the forest. It is a very disturbing sight. And I think that lesson from one of our favorite scriptures is that Jesus took no delight in destruction. I see him as a positive person, with a view of God's kingdom and a hope that there was a place for everyone in that kingdom. That is the hope of our church as well. In a shaky world, we need something solid to cling to. If you ever wonder if people need the Presbyterian Church, just wait until times get bad, and we see how much we need the community, the affirmation, and the compassion that are defining parts of our church and denomination. It is very real.

LINUS' CASTLE IN THE SAND

So take one more look at the cartoon that Sparky drew a couple of decades ago of Linus building a castle in the sand. The first thing to notice is how fun that must have been to draw. All of the little bumps on the tops of the buildings, and the windows, and the sand must have been like a doodle on paper.

But the other thing I know about this comes from his long time friend, Lawrence Merideth, who said that this was a clever picture based upon scripture that Sparky said was "just too obvious." In the last frame, a large wave crashes down and washes the castle out to sea, while Linus looks like a deer in the headlights saying, "I know there is a theological lesson in this, but I don't know what it is." Of course he knew what the lesson was. Build

your home on a solid foundation, and not too near the beach. That is the lesson of Matthew 7. This cartoon is Schulz' illustration of our scripture today and it has always been one of my favorites.

But this is not a statement about houses, but a statement about faith. This is the culmination of the collection of sermons that we call "the Sermon on the Mount."

WHAT IS FOUNDATIONAL?

So let's go back and see what Jesus said the solid foundational statements are:

- You will be judged by your judgments.
 - Don't be so quick to point out the speck in your neighbor's eye when you have an impediment the size of a log in your own. That is, don't be a hypocrite, don't be an actor.
 - Don't give what is holy to dogs who don't appreciate it.
 - Ask the Lord for guidance in your life; knock and the door will be opened to you. Seek good things from God, and that will provide a direction for your life.
 - Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
 - Beware of false prophets. Not everyone who seems sincere is authentic or well grounded. Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing. That is, beware of imposters. Judge by the fruits they produce. The apple does not fall far from the tree that produced it.
 - Not everyone who says Lord, Lord, is genuine. Sincerity is not authenticity. So we must earn respect rather than demanding respect.
 - And finally, when you see people who practice these foundational principles, they are like persons who build on a solid foundation.
- 24. 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise person who built his house on rock.'**

Jesus' audience was probably the Pharisees. At any given moment, any one of us could become one of them.

DOWNSTREAM ON SEVERAL LEVELS

We all live downstream. This is true on several different levels.

**From an environmental perspective,
how I treat this planet becomes
part of the legacy that I leave to my
grandchildren's grandchildren.**

**From a spiritual perspective,
how I treat my children becomes part of my
legacy to their children's children.**

Are you stunned sometimes by the maturity and beauty of the little girls who turned into radiant young women seemingly overnight, and the boys who became men?

They are the recipients of the genes and consciousness of all their family members who came before them. This was true from the moment they were born, and it will be so as they bring their own children into this world, adding not only their genes (and their spouse's genes) to the mix but the accumulation of their beliefs about life ... and so, on it flows.

LIFE IS A STREAM INTO WHICH WE POUR OUR BELIEFS

Life really is a stream into which we pour our beliefs, and all of those who come after us will be the direct beneficiaries of what we believe. The great thing is that with this awareness comes choice! As we awaken to the fact that we don't necessarily have to pass on beliefs that have not served us or others well, we can choose to eliminate them from the legacy we pass on.

- **In your mind's eye, revisit the legacy of consciousness you inherited from your primary caregivers, be they your parents or others.**
- **Have you been living from the beliefs given to you without questioning them? Do they serve you well, and will you pass them on to others downstream? You may think that it's too late because "my children are already grown and with families of their own."**
- **It is never too late to make a difference in someone's life. Reach out to your family in a way you may never have done before. Become a youth church teacher. Spend time with young people. Find a place to be a living example of unconditional love, reverence, patience, and selflessness.**
- **Be consciously aware that all life is a sacred experience, and the legacy you leave will enrich others far downstream.**



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