

VOTC.5

Matthew 7: 24-27.

The world is full of uncertainty. Even though markets seem to be doing well now, we know from the past that we can drop into a recession, or a depression, very quickly. We continually hear rumors of war. Will the United States get into a war with Iran? Russia? China? Tensions escalate between India and Pakistan, Russia and Eastern Europe, Israel and her neighbors. Even though our lives may seem comfortable, we wonder if the foundations are as strong as we think.

Jesus came at a similar time. From one perspective everything seemed to be going well in Judea at the time Jesus was ministering. This was especially true in Jerusalem where Herod, who was king of Palestine at that time, was building a new temple. The establishment in the land of Israel was doing very well. However, there were many signs of instability as well. The people were not happy with their Roman masters or their Jewish masters. The poor were growing poorer and the rich richer, especially in Judea where the ruling class used their power to defraud the poor. Taxation was heavy. Slowly a bigger and bigger segment of the people were growing unhappy with what was going on.

Jesus comes into that context and announces the kingdom. That is what Jesus' ministry is all about. He is announcing the kingdom of God. Matthew records one of his major sermons where he lays out to the people of Israel what the kingdom of God is going to look like. He ends that sermon with a warning. A great disaster is coming. If the people of Israel are going to find refuge from this disaster, they have to find safety in Jesus' words. They have to follow Jesus words.

What is the judgment that is coming? Jesus alludes to what will happen in 70 A.D. when the Roman will come and destroy Jerusalem. In the Bible, a flood is often a picture of an invasion. The Romans are a coming flood that will surround and destroy Jerusalem. Jesus is saying, 'don't put your trust in that house; that house is going to be destroyed.'

In Jesus' parable, he uses the picture of building a house. The wise man, the man who can see what is going on. He pays attention to the weather patterns. He discerns that a great storm is coming, so he doesn't build the house where people normally put their houses; on the ground that is easy to dig into. He knows that if he wants his house to stay up when the storms come this year. He is going to have to go up into the mountains, dig into the rock, and put his house there.

The wise man is a picture, of the one who discerns that Jesus is a prophet, hears the words of Jesus and does them. So he builds his house on the basis of the words of Jesus. Jesus tells the Jews that it is those who are meek and those who hunger after righteousness and those who are poor in Spirit that are happy. They are happy because they will be safe through the time of judgment. They will be safe because they will listen to Jesus and by listening to him they will find safety during that time. The wise man invests in Jesus because he knows that through Jesus he will be safe.

The foolish man, on the other hand, continues to do things as they have always been done. He doesn't discern the changes in weather patterns. He continues to build his house on the sand. It makes sense. It's easy to dig there. It's closer to the water so he can easily source food and water for himself.

This is the state of the majority of the people at the time that Jesus speaks. They don't discern the trouble that is coming. Or perhaps they do, but they think they will be safe with the old ways of doing

things. They are investing in Jerusalem, a city about to be destroyed. They are investing in the words of the scribes and the Pharisees. They are building their house on the foundation of these men's words. They are foolish. They do not realize or do not want to realize that God is building a new house in Jesus Christ. The wise man will build on what Christ says.

Jesus Christ continues to build his house today. It is the churches and the individuals that seek to build on the foundation of his word that will continue to live in the world. Since the time of Christ, there has been a lot of trouble in the world, but Christ has preserved those who believe in his name. He has preserved those who live according to the obedience of faith.

Most importantly those who build on the word of Jesus Christ are saved from the judgment of God. Those Jews who trusted in Christ were ultimately saved from his judgment. Even though many of them died in the troubles that surrounded the time of Christ, they died with the promise of eternal life. They died with the promise that they would come through the time of judgment the time of tribulation, safe in the arms of Jesus.

It's the same for us today. If we want confidence in the face of our troubles, if we want to survive that thing we all have to go through; death, we must look to Jesus. He offers himself; as an anchor, a rock and a stronghold.