



Village Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

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Rock Solid

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Let me ask you, friends: What do real estate, apple pie, and faith have in common? I know I teased some of you whom I saw on Friday with that question, and I don't know if you came up with an answer – but I think it's pretty obvious: They all need a solid foundation or they will never be the best they can be and probably will fall apart.

In the parable of the two builders that we read from Matthew this morning, Jesus teaches the importance of building your house on solid ground. We are all building our lives (or, in this parable, our houses) on *something*, and when everything is going well and life is great a weak or shaky foundation won't reveal itself.

But let's face it, how often is everything really going great in life? In the real world stress, anxiety, problems, and struggles come at us almost daily and sometimes hourly. Those are times when the wind is howling and the rain is beating down on our houses. They are also the times when we become keenly aware of how firm and sure our foundation is – or *isn't*.

So, let's take a closer look at Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7 today a couple of different ways and see what we might learn about making sure our foundation is strong... And yes, we will be talking about pie and real estate a little bit.

In the verses we read, Jesus said those who hear his words AND DO them are wise builders. They have built their homes on rock solid foundations. The winds howl, the rains come – even a flood comes – but the house stands firm.

On the other hand, those who hear his words and fail to live by them are foolish builders. They may build the grandest of houses, but they sit on a shaky foundation.

Let's assume that this "house" we are building in Jesus' parable is a metaphor for our whole lives. It represents our faith, our vocation or job, our relationships, our health, everything. Notice that the whole house needs to rest on a solid foundation, not just a few parts.

It's very easy for us to compartmentalize our lives without even being aware of it. Then, instead of an organic whole, our lives look more like colorful pie charts with hard lines dividing the sections.

We go to church on Sundays, we may participate in a weekly bible study, and maybe we set aside some time for pray every day. If so, we probably feel like that "slice of our pie" is strong. We've checked the boxes and think we're doing fine there....

But then we consciously or unconsciously leave Jesus in his pie slice. We move on to our vocational or daily chores slice, our spouse and family slice, or our recreational slice, and leave our faith out. It's almost as if we think Jesus doesn't have much to do with those areas –

When, in reality, the ways that Jesus taught us to live and the steadying force of his presence are what can make every area of our lives (or every room in our house) better. So, the first thing to realize about this parable from Jesus is that it is about our whole life – not just our faith or some parts of it.

Now, let's think a little bit about the threats to our houses. In the parable Jesus mentions rains, floods (streams rising), and winds. What might these things look like in our everyday lives?

Well, **rains** can vary widely. They can be a foggy drizzle that sucks the joy out of our day. They can be light – we may need an umbrella but we can still go about our business. Or they can be out and out downpours that we can't even see through, complete with terrifying thunder and lightning.

Taken together, these rains are the everyday troubles of life. Some troubles are small, persistent, and annoying. Some are more troublesome. And some storms are swift, unexpected, and overwhelming.

Floods are obviously times when an all-out life threatening disaster is coming at us: a catastrophic illness; the death of a loved one; a divorce; the loss of a job or income. During floods we are in danger of being swept off our feet and drowned.

What I see the **winds** as are words. Forget about the sticks and stones saying, words do have real power in the world and in our lives. They can build up or tear down. The things we hear people say, or that we read that they wrote – whether they are saying them to us or about us or about other people and things – can all have a positive or negative effect on us.

The words that beat against our houses are things like thoughtless remarks from a friend, a harsh rebuke from someone, a heartless, cowardly attack online by an internet troll – or, maybe worst of all, the negative, defeating self-talk we are all prone to subjecting ourselves to.

Jesus wants us to not only hear but put into practice the words he says to us so that we will be planted solidly in his wisdom and love – and therefore be able to withstand the rain, floods and winds that always come in life.

Let's go back to our pie chart analogy now and talk about some real **pie**. Faith is not a "slice of our pie" or just a part of our lives. Faith is the key, foundational element if we want to withstand the storms of life.

Good, high-quality faith made of the right ingredients (Jesus' teachings) is as important in our lives as good, high-quality crust is to a delicious pie. No matter what you fill a pie with or how you bake it, a lousy crust makes a lousy pie. Likewise, no matter what we fill our lives with and how we go about it – it all eventually falls apart without good faith.

I know that nowadays it's easy to skimp on pie crust and lots of people do it. It's a lot less work to just buy a pre-made crust at the store and dump your ingredients in. But that never really turns out as great as a pie that someone has actually put effort into, does it?

Of course, as I'm sure you can guess, the whole time I was writing this sermon I was thinking about Lynne's pies – and it made my mouth water and my stomach growl... But I know that a lot of you out there can also make fantastic pie crust because you have learned and practiced it for yourself...

Which is exactly the point I'm getting at when it comes to our faith as well. For faith that gives us the foundation Jesus is talking about – the solid rock of his truth, his words, his example, and his love – can't just be picked up at the church and put on a shelf at home until you need it.

Faith that will hold our lives together and make us our very best consists of getting the ingredients from Jesus himself. He invites each of us to hear his words for ourselves – learn from his wisdom and truth – be touched by his compassion and love – and put them into practice in our lives.

Store bought faith is a lot like store bought pie crust, friends. It'll get you by in a pinch, but it isn't anything like the real stuff that you have worked on and perfected with the Master as your guide.

So, don't just take your faith from me or any other preacher. Or from your friends. Or from what your parents handed down to you. Jesus offers his wisdom, peace, strength, and love directly to each of us through the scriptures and the presence of his Spirit with us.

Now, I promised earlier we would talk about **real estate** today too – and I'm sure you've all been looking forward to that! So, let's flip the switch and change to a different metaphor for a bit.

This one comes from something I wrote over 20 years ago, so I'm not sure how good it is – but it gives a different train of thought stemming from the two builders parable I will humbly offer in case God wants to speak to any of us through it...

Here goes. Back then, when I thought about our life and faith as a house we build either on solid rock or sand – it occurred to me that most of us live in a variety of houses during our lifetimes, and they are not all the same.

Obviously, they aren't all the same as far as the floor plan or how they were built. But another major difference I see that can be correlated to our faith is in the way in which we possess, or take up residence, in these houses of our lives.

We may have a house we only occupy a week or two a year through a timeshare. We may live in a rented house or apartment. Or we may have made the commitment of buying our house, complete with whatever mortgage we needed to take on.

Thinking about those 3 different ways we can live in a house back then led me to think about 3 different kinds of faith many of us might live in during the course of our lives, which I described as the following:

First, there's **timeshare faith**. Timeshare faith is very much like timeshare property. It's something we have invested in but don't actually own, and so there's a lot less commitment and responsibility involved.

What sort of Christian might have this kind of faith; we might ask? Well, let's not judge them too harshly because I suspect that many of us have been in this category at one time or another.

Timeshare Christians really do have faith. They believe in God and accept Jesus as their Savior. And their faith is important enough that they have set aside some time for it. They take it seriously, but also tend to put God in a box (so to speak) by fitting God into their thoughts and schedule at designated times and places.

For example: Daily timeshare Christians set aside time to pray or read the Bible each day. Weekly timeshare Christians attend worship on Sundays. And yearly timeshare Christians designate special days, like Christmas and Easter, to focus on God.

The good thing about timeshare faith is that it does set aside special time for God and is very focused during those times. People practicing this faith feel renewed and strengthened from their time with God and they know where the rock is.

But the bad thing about it (apart from the fact that God deserves our total commitment) is that the storms of life never quit coming and it's no fun getting caught in them away from our rock.

A second kind of faith I think many of us have experienced before is rock bottom. **Rock bottom faith** is desperate faith. It comes when we've been knocked to our knees with pain, fear or remorse. It's the gut-wrenching, "I can't survive this, so God please save me" kind of faith.

The good thing about rock bottom faith is that it is pure. There are no false pretenses or pride left when we reach it. We quit thinking that we can get by pretty well on our own and realize our utter dependence on God's mercy, grace and love.

But the bad thing is that it hurts so much to get there – and there is no guarantee that we will remember it's lessons once things get better again.

The third and obviously best, kind of faith – the kind that Jesus was advising us on how to build in that parable – is Rock Solid. **Rock solid faith** operates when things are good or bad. It's running morning, noon, and night.

It goes with us to church, home, work, play, everywhere. For you see, rock solid faith doesn't have any boxes. God is everywhere, and Jesus isn't assigned to a place in our lives but rather our whole lives are assigned to him.

What does that look like in daily living? Well, rock solid faith includes the sure knowledge of our total dependence on God that rock bottom faith teaches us – And it includes the discipline of setting aside special time to be with God that timeshare faith does – but it goes even further beyond all of that...

There are no more pie charts or dividing lines between our life at work and our life at home and our life at church in rock solid faith because Jesus has become our all in all and lives in us. In other words, it is a complete commitment or total ownership of a life built on the solid rock who is our Lord.

Building this kind of a life or faith costs more. We have to do maintenance and repairs. We have to share the space we are in because we have to make room for God's things – which is stuff like compassion, understanding, forgiveness, acceptance and love. And we give up some of our independence and freedom because our life is not just our own anymore – We have a partner in everything.

But it's worth it because this partner brings out the best in us. People with rock solid faith work with integrity, knowing that our silent partner is watching and expecting our best. We play with joy, reminded by the Spirit what a precious, miraculous gift life is.

We make decisions with care because there are no secrets with a live-in partner. We treat others with respect and compassion, because the One who is living in and loving us loves them too.

We laugh, celebrate, cry and care very deeply because we know that everything and everyone matters in this creation we are a part of. And we learn to love without conditions and limits, because we ourselves are receiving that kind of love every day.

So, there you have it friends. A sermon about faith, real estate, and pie that you never knew you needed to hear... But I hope that at least something among the many thoughts and words shared has spoken to your soul and pointed you back toward Jesus' words, upon which we are called to be actively building our houses.

Thank you for listening, and may God bless us all as we seek to make sure the foundation of our lives and our faith is securely resting on Jesus, our **Rock** and our Redeemer. Amen.