

Sermon
20 July 2014
West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

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Text: Matthew 7:24-29

Baptism & Confirmation of faith

In 1174 the Italian architect Bonnano Pisano began work on what would become his most famous project: A separately standing bell tower for the Cathedral of the city of Pisa.

The tower was to be 8-stories high & 185-foot tall. But there was one "little" problem: builders quickly discovered the soil was much softer than they anticipated, and the foundation was far too shallow to hold the structure!

Sure enough, before long the tower began to tilt, and it continued to tilt... Finally the architect and builders realized that nothing could be done to make the leaning Tower of Pisa straight again.

It took 176 years to build, and many things were done to try and compensate for the "tilt", but nothing worked.

The tower has stood for over 800 years, but it leans 18 feet away from where it should be. One day, experts say, this tower is going to collapse,

and this is unavoidable. *And all of this, because it wasn't built on right foundation.*

No matter how impressive or how ordinary, without the right foundation any building is doomed.

The same thing is true for our lives. If you want to stay standing through the storms of life, you need to make sure that your life is built on Jesus.

I'm not saying that if you believe in God nothing bad will ever happen to you. Because that just isn't true. Even if you build your house on the right foundation, this house is still on earth, and storms are part and parcel of life on earth.

There can be 2 houses exactly the same standing next to each other, and you wouldn't think that there is any difference between them, until a storm comes. It's only *after* the storm that you'll be able to see which house was built properly and on a good foundation – because *that* will be the house that's still standing. It doesn't mean that that house won't have any damage, but the good news is that damage is repairable.

Just like that, people who believe in God don't look any different from people who don't believe in God – but when the storms of life come... *Then* the difference becomes visible.

Because where hardship and pain and sorrow and questions can tear people apart and break them down completely; people who have a proper foundation, people who can turn to God in their hour of need, will never find themselves in a situation beyond repair.

If your foundation is right, nothing else matters much. Because after a storm, through his Spirit, God will help you to put your life back together. Sometimes very quickly, sometimes slowly – but brick by brick He will help you to become whole again.

And obviously, depending on the kind of storm it was – your “house” might look a little different after all the repairs have been done. There might be a few things missing after a bereavement, things that you will never ever be able to replace, things that you will always remember, but things that you will learn to live without, however hard it may be – in time.

Ageing or an illness might cause you to downsize, to get rid of the stairs or even insert a chairlift, but none of this change the fact that your house is your house. You will always be you, no matter what happens to you. And God will help you to see that.

And then of course, after some storms you might improve your house in such a way that it looks even better than before – like breaking free from an abusive relationship or adapting a healthier lifestyle.

The secret lies in the foundation.

But now we come to the tricky question – *how* do we build a proper foundation? In Matt 7:24 Jesus says: “...everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

Everyone who hears these words and *puts them into practice*... The purpose of Scripture is not to *inform* us, but to *transform* us.

If we really listen to the words of Jesus, that will change us, that will put us into action.

And what did Jesus say? Love one another. Walk an extra mile. Turn the other cheek.

Every time you put someone else's needs before your own, you are digging your foundation a little deeper; every time you keep quiet when you wanted to say something nasty, you are digging your foundation a little deeper. Every time you give, forgive, help, are patient and truthful and kind, every single time you share the love of God with others, you are digging your foundation a little deeper.

And then, when the rains of sorrow come, or the floodwaters of disappointment, or the winds of suffering – you'll stay standing – because your foundation is deep and strong. Then you won't question God for allowing a storm to hit you, because people who have a relationship with God know that we won't ever be able to understand everything that happens to us. But questioning it is going to bring us nowhere. People who have a relationship with God realize that although storms are hard to cope with, it's through the storms that God makes us strong. And if in times of difficulty we try to see the bigger picture, we'll realize that God might even be teaching us something or using us in one way or another...

In this day and age a question on so many people's lips is: How do we keep our children safe against the storms of life? This is such an important question, but actually, the answer is easy to find. It's written on every single page of the Bible: How do we keep our children safe against the storms of life? By teaching them to build their lives on the right foundation. And how do we do that? By setting them an example.

And today did just that. And if you 2,, keep building your lives on this strong foundation, your children will always be safe. As parents you have a very big responsibility – you need to live in such a way *inside* you're your house, that when your children one day start building their own houses, they will straight away start building according to God's plans, because that is what they saw every day growing up in their parents house.

This is such an easy concept to understand. Who would choose to perish if you could choose to live?

Who would like to be like the leaning tower of Pisa – living their lives in such a way that it is just a matter of time before they are going to collapse - with the whole world watching?!

No. Choose this morning to build your house on the rock. Let the word of God transform you. So that when the storms of life come, you will stay standing. Even a simple wee house built on a rock is better than an impressive structure built in the sand...

Amen