

Sermon
27 January 2019
West Kirk & Polbeth Harwood

By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald

Reading: Luke 6:46-49

I might be South African, but as the years go by, I'm feeling more and more Scottish!

It might have something to do with the amount of haggis, neeps and tatties I eat every January! For somebody who 11 years ago didn't even know what haggis was, I have surely made up for that by now!

I'm also able to recite two Burns poems just as well as my boys can recite them now; I've replied to the "toast to the lassies" at one of the Burns Suppers I attended this week; and as far as the "immortal memory of Robert Burns" is concerned, I've learned quite a few things about the bard again this year.

One of these are that Burns' embracing of the Scottish language in a time when lots of local languages died out, formed the foundation for our use of the language today.

So, while we are talking about foundations to build upon, let's listen to an interpretation of our Scripture reading in Scots!

Another way of understanding our Scripture reading, is by looking at the photo: Edinburgh Castle, the icon of Scotland, recognisable all over the world. This is a visual image of what we've just heard – a huge big house built on a rock, standing there for many many years and no doubt will be standing there for many more.

Research undertaken in 2014 identified 26 sieges in this castle's 1100-year-old history, giving it a claim to having been "the most besieged place in Great Britain and one of the most attacked in the world."

Yet, it's still standing. Because it is built on a rock.

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The 4 verses we read together from Luke today is probably one of the most straight-forward and easiest messages to understand in all of the Bible.

Jesus says that everybody who listens to what he's been teaching, will be like someone who built their house upon a rock; and all those who ignore his words, will be like people who build their houses on the sand.

Your house – your life. You can choose *where* you build it. You can choose *how* you build it.

The only thing is: You might not be able to choose *what happens* to you, and that is why it is of the utmost importance to build your life in the right way in the right place.

Because storms will come.

I don't think I have to explain to anybody in this country that sometimes the weather can be very unpredictable. And we have no control over that. But if we prepare ourselves as well as we possibly can, we WILL be okay.

But you know, for me this wee passage is about more than just building your house on a proper foundation, in order to make sure that it doesn't collapse if difficulties rain down on you...

I think the message in here for us as a church is that we need to build our church life on a rock too, but as a church we shouldn't just be any old house – we should be a light house!

A lighthouse built on a rock.

Why? Because that is the one thing God expects his children to do – to let their lights shine... To bring light into this dark world we live in.

Because at the moment there are so many storms raging; the winds of change are blowing against the church and people all over are wondering what will become of the church?

Will the winds of change just blow the church over? Will the waves of agnosticism and disbelief, ego-centrism and cynicism eventually knock the church over??

My answer to this is NO. Because we are built on a rock! THE rock. And because of that we can take it. We can withstand the wind and the waves.

We might have to build in some re-enforcements, make some changes and fix some weak points, but stand, we will stand!

As long as we practice our faith in the way Jesus taught us to, we'll be able to be his church here on earth.

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The thing is just, a church is made up of all the members, and therefore it is important that all of us individually also make sure that our lives are built on the right foundations.

This is not easy though, because so many hard and difficult things happen to us all the time:

We fall out with people we love.

We feel as if nobody understands us.

We are worried about the political situation in our country.

We are worried about the state of the world we live in!

We get bad news about our health.

People we love die.

Our plans don't work out.

Our children don't turn out into who we were hoping they would be.

Our spouses neglect us.

Our parents, our siblings, our friends, disappoint us; expect too much of us.

Our past haunts us.

The list is endless...

Sometimes it feels as if hardship and problems are raining down on us with such force that we can barely stand up straight, never mind move forward!!

But the things about life is: we have to keep moving forward, otherwise we would fall over...

Luckily we have a Father in heaven we can hold on to when we feel as if we can't stand up all by ourselves anymore...

He is bigger and stronger than any problem we can ever have. So let's not ever forget that.

Storms are a part of life, there's nothing we can do about that. It's how we handle it that makes the difference.

So let's choose right. Let's build our lives on the Lord.

Let's go to his Word if we are looking for answers.

Let's come to his church for fellowship when we feel isolated.

Let's talk to him in prayer if there is anything we can't understand.

And let's *trust* that he will *never* let go of our hands.

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And you know what the beauty of all this is?

If all of us do this,

if we build our lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ,

and allow the Holy Spirit to be the mortar that hold our lives together;

if we turn the other cheek,

walk the extra mile,

and reach out to those in need – together, as a church, we will be like a lighthouse, securely built on a rock, with a light so bright, that the darkness of this world will not consume us or those around us; because then the light and love of Christ will shine through us and will be made visible through our words, actions and reactions.

So let's brace ourselves, let's go face life and everything the world throws at us, because with a strong foundation, we'll stay standing.

After all, on some level, all of us here are Scots – whether this be by birth or by association – and Scots are *strong and kind*. This was true in the past, it's true today, and it will stay true in the future too. So, let's stand strong and “tak' a cup o' kindness yet, for auld lang syne!”

Amen