Built on the Rock: Faith in Jesus' Word and Works

1. Read Luke 6:46–49. Jesus teaches that it is not enough to hear His words—we must also put them into practice. How can we live out Jesus' call to "build on the rock" in ordinary life, and what does this image teach us about the difference between simply listening to Him and truly obeying Him?

   In everyday life, "building on the rock" means actually doing what Jesus says, not just agreeing that He's right.

   It can look like:

   - forgiving someone instead of merely agreeing that we should forgive.
   - telling the truth even when it costs you not just agreeing that telling the truth is best.
   - loving difficult people, not just agreeing that we should love difficult people.
   - putting Jesus' words above your feelings, habits, or culture, not just…
   - choosing prayer, humility, generosity, and obedience in ordinary decisions, not just…

   It means making your life line up with what you say you believe

   So the warning is: hearing Jesus without following Him is like building a house that looks fine until the storm hits. Obedience is what shows real trust in Him. The blessed life is not merely a life of religious knowledge, but a life grounded in obedient communion with Christ. To "build on the rock" is to arrange one's entire existence around the words of Jesus—to let His teaching shape our desires, choices, relationships, and understanding of reality itself. In this sense, the parable is not just about individual ideas about morality, but about the spiritual architecture of the soul.

   Can you think of an Old Testament story that echoes this parable, and what do the two passages teach us together?

   The Old Testament account that most closely parallels this image is the flood in Noah's day.

   Notes: Methuselah's name means something like "When he dies, it shall be sent." Lamech's name (no known root word) but many think it comes from the root word for "sorrow or lament." And Lamech tells us what Noah's name means" "He shall bring us rest or comfort." Genesis plays on this… "the ark came to "rest" on Mt. Ararat." Also Noah's name spelled backwards in Hebrew is the Hebrew word for "grace." This is why Genesis says "Noah found favor with God", it means "he knew God's grace." But this is also because Noah did what the Lord commanded, even when it seemed absurd. He built the ark.

There too, judgment comes as water, and there too the dividing line is not mere awareness of God's word, but faithful response to it. Noah hears God and acts; the rest of humanity lives as though God's word does not define reality. The flood thus becomes a tragic picture of what happens when human beings abandon their calling as image-bearers and instead live according to violence, corruption, and self-rule. Genesis 5–6 highlights this degeneration, especially in the line of Cain and in the widespread violence that marks the earth. The other Lamech's boastful violence and the Nephilim narrative both underscore a world disordered by pride and unrighteousness.

Seen together, Noah's flood and Jesus' parable teach the same truth: judgment reveals foundations. What one has built upon is only fully disclosed when the storm arrives. The difference between the wise and the foolish is not either hearing or not hearing, but hearing and doing. Christ's words are not merely information to be admired—they are the living foundation on which human life must be constructed if it is to endure. We are image-bearers of our great teacher, Jesus!

2. Read Luke 7:1-17. What do we know about the centurion, and what do we learn about the centurion, that is surprising and even ironic about the way he and the Jewish elders view his worthiness?

How does this story challenge the values we saw in the Sermon on the Mount? First, he is Roman. Obviously, he has an important position, commanding 100 men. He was wealthy enough to have built a synagogue. This means he's probably a convert to Judaism—a believer. For these reasons, he was respected and loved by the Jewish people in Capernaum. So much so, that the elders of people go and talk to Jesus on his behalf. The fact that He himself does not go to Jesus might indicate humility, like John the Baptist who did not consider himself worthy to untie Jesus' sandals. The irony is that this centurion feels unworthy but the Jewish elders feel he is worthy, primarily because "he is the one who built us our synagogue." Contrast this with the blessings and woes of the sermon on the mount! Here the gentile seems to understand better than the Jews. He trusts the power of the Word of Jesus, and shows that he is willing to build on that rock even in the storm of potential tragedy in his household.

Archaeologists have uncovered the synagogue built by this centurion in Capernaum. The darker foundation visible on the left dates to the first century and would have been part of the synagogue he commissioned. The white stone seen in both images was added later, in the third century, when the synagogue was rebuilt.

3. Based on Luke's account, what do we know about the widow of Nain? What does Jesus' response to the widow of Nain reveal about His heart for the vulnerable, and how does that shape the way we think about compassion today?

She had lost her husband and now her only son. This means she had little to look forward to. Women, in that day in Israel, were often looked on as second class citizens. From what we know, they could not work for money. They were dependent on their husband and family. But now, this woman has neither. She has no security in this society. Everyone will likely ignore her, but not Jesus. He has compassion on her. The Greek word for compassion here is significant. It only occurs a few times in the Gospels but it's always what Jesus shows for helpless sinners. The word's etymology comes from the background of ancient pagan sacrifice, showing that Jesus's compassion is driven by his willingness to suffer and die to save the lost. The word is *splagchnizomai* which literally means "his guts moved." It's also significant that Jesus touched the funeral bier which would have made Him unclean.

4. Why does Luke's account of Jesus raising the widow's son matter so much, and what does it reveal about who Jesus really is beyond just being a miracle worker?

Luke records this to show that Jesus does not need anyone's faith in order to act, even when the situation is as hopeless as death. It also shows that Jesus' word has power not only over sickness, but over death itself. The miracle recalls the stories of Elijah and Elisha in the Old Testament, which puts Jesus in that prophetic line — but also shows that He is greater than any prophet before Him. By raising the widow's son, Jesus reveals Himself as the promised Messiah, with authority even over death. The crowd sees that He is a great prophet and says that God has visited His people, but they still do not fully understand that the Messiah must also suffer and be rejected. So this miracle does more than show Jesus' compassion and power. It also points ahead to the cross, reminding us that Jesus' mission is ultimately for the purpose of saving us from death and will include His own suffering, death, and resurrection.

5. Read Luke 7:18–23. John's disciples had already told him about Jesus' miracles and teaching, including the raising of the widow's son and the healing of the centurion's servant. These miracles matched Old Testament promises like Isaiah 29:18–19 and Isaiah 61:1–2. So what was John still unsure about when it came to Jesus' identity?

To answer this, look closely at those Old Testament passages. They talk about more than just the blind seeing, the lame walking, lepers being healed, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised, and the poor hearing the good news. What else do they talk about? Why do you think Jesus leaves that part out in His reply?

Next, compare this with Jesus' words in Luke 4:18–19 and John's expectations in Luke 3:17.

While in session 10, we noted that John comforted his hearers with the certainty that "He will gather the wheat into the barn," none the less, there was the expectation that the chaff would be burned. All the Old Testament prophecies speak of judgement for the wicked and the enemies of God's people. But Jesus leaves out those parts, such as when he preached in Nazareth. Why? It shows that his first coming was not for judgment but redemption and grace. His second coming will be the day of the Lord that brings judgment.

6. Read Luke 7:24–35. In earlier sessions of this Bible study, we discussed Jesus' words here concerning John the Baptist. But notice Luke's parenthetical note in verses 29–30. The hard-hearted rejection of the Pharisees had nothing to do with Jesus' miracles and signs; it had everything to do with Jesus'

_____ (word/teaching). What might this teach us about the application of our own Baptism and what it means for us each day?

This means their rejection was not mainly about a lack of miracles or evidence. They saw Jesus' works, but still resisted Him. The issue was their response to Jesus' message. They didn't see a need to repent in hay day of John and they certainly see no need to repent in the presence of Christ. See the next account discussed last week, about Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman in Luke 7: 36-50.

NOTE: Also take note of Luke 7:33-34. For any Christian teaching that commands that someone must fast or abstain from alcohol in order to be "truly" faithful, here Jesus plainly states that he not only ate and fellowshipped through eating, but he also drank alcohol.

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