

## Matthew 7:21-29; 1 Corinthians 3:10-17

### Kingdom Construction

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In the early hours of the morning of Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June, in Surfside near Miami in Florida, an apartment block collapsed into a heap of rubble. The death toll appears to be more than 150. A report three years previously had highlighted structural damage to the concrete slab below the swimming pool and "abundant cracking ... of columns, beams and walls in the parking area." An engineer who has investigated structural collapse has said, "It appears to be a foundation-related matter."

Foundations are vital to any building. Inadequate foundations can prove fatal. Strong, stable and well laid foundations are essential in any building project.

This is the clear lesson of the parable that Jesus told of the foolish man who built his house on sand and the wise man who built his house upon the rock. Jesus forces us to ask what forms the foundation for our own lives. Will that foundation stand the test of time and of the various storms that may shake our lives? Will it stand the test of eternity?

But this morning I want first to take a step back to look at the big theme given me for this morning, *Kingdom Construction*. Jesus has been teaching the crowds in what we call *The Sermon on the Mount*. So much of Jesus' teaching is focussed on the theme of the kingdom of God – or as Matthew prefers to express it, the kingdom of heaven. Listen to how Matthew reports that Jesus began his ministry:

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news [the gospel] of the kingdom, and healing every disease and illness among the people.  
(Matthew 4:23)

Jesus was proclaiming the good news that God's kingdom was now arriving.

### God is at work building his kingdom

I think it's important for us to understand that this Kingdom is not some human construction; God is at work building his kingdom. Indeed, this has been God's purpose throughout all the pages of Scripture.

He created Adam and Eve to rule over his creation; to reign over it in God's name, under God's rule, for God's glory and for the blessing of all its creatures, that it might be *his* kingdom, the place where he reigned. But they rebelled against him, wanting to make it a kingdom of their own.

God chose the children of Israel to be his people. He rescued them from slavery in Egypt. He brought them to Mt Sinai declaring that they were his treasured people who would be a kingdom of priests. They were to enjoy the land that God was giving to them. They were to live there under God's rule and for his glory. They were to be the means by which God's blessings were to be brought to all the nations of the earth. But, like Adam and Eve, they rebelled against God. The kings that they chose to rule over them led them into idolatry.

But now God is building his kingdom. That kingdom finds its focus and foundation in his appointed king, Jesus the Christ, God's Messiah. God's kingdom is being built on the work and words of Jesus: his death as the atoning sacrifice for our sins and rebellion against the living God; his resurrection as the power of the New Creation breaking into our broken world with its crumbling foundations in imminent danger of collapse. It is being built on the foundation of Jesus' words, the word by which the world was created. He is calling us to come on board with his kingdom project, to hear his voice and follow him.

Jesus calls us to build our lives on this foundation, to hear his word, to come to him for forgiveness and transformation and to join God's great kingdom building project. God is building his kingdom on this foundation.

## **The power for kingdom building**

Jesus calls us to build our lives upon him and upon the words he has spoken. But it's not just a matter of words – of talk. In 1 Corinthians 4:20 the apostle Paul writes, "The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power."

The kingdom is not about of a better set of rules: do this! Don't do that! It's not just words, it is power. In Matthew 7:22-23 Jesus speaks of those who call him "Lord, Lord" and claim to have done many things in Jesus' name, but his verdict on them is, "I never knew you." The kingdom of God is not about seeking to do the right things; it's about knowing Christ and the power of his resurrection life in our lives. It's about his transforming power making us new – making us like him.

Have you watched a new building being constructed? It begins with the foundations being dug and laid. At that stage you do not know the details of what the finished building will look like but you do know its shape. The shape of the foundations determines the shape of the building.

Our lives are to be built upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ – his life, his words, his actions. As our lives are built on this foundation we will become Christ shaped. By the power of his Spirit at work within us we will grow to resemble him.

What is shaping your life day-by-day?

What do others see when they look at your life?

God is building his kingdom. It is built upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ: on his life and teaching; on his atoning death and his resurrection. Resurrection power is the power by which the kingdom is built.

But that kingdom consists of far more than individual lives touched and transformed by the Spirit of God...

## **The kingdom God is building upon the Lord Jesus Christ is to be made visible in the life of the church**

The kingdom of God is to be visible especially in the corporate lives of Christian men, women and families.

Listen to what Paul has to say in 1 Corinthians 3:9-13

For we are fellow workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.

God is building his kingdom and, says Paul, he has recruited us to be fellow workers with him on his building site. That site can sometimes be messy and chaotic but God has a clear purpose in mind: he is building a temple to be his own dwelling place in the presence and person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the power of his Spirit.

Paul wants to see the church grow and increase: grow in numbers; grow in strength; grow in grace; grow in influence. He wants it to grow through the reading, teaching and practical application of God's word. He wants it to grow through loving and careful pastoral oversight. He wants it to grow as each person engages with and encourages other.

But this building up of the church must always be on the solid foundation of Christ himself – not on gimmicks or on human personalities; not on clever schemes but on Christ, knowing him, following him and becoming like him. That's why our church logo is, "Learning to live the Life."

Paul is concerned that there are some whose ministry among the churches is all about themselves. They are building with straw wood and stubble. Like the houses of the first two of the three little pigs in the children's story, such building work will soon be reduced to dust.

In this building project – God's kingdom building project – we are to be careful how we build.

## **Applying these things to ourselves**

### **How is your own life being built?**

What is the foundation on which you are building your life? What shapes your decisions? What shapes your actions and your reactions to others? What shapes your relationships and priorities? What shapes what you read, what you watch, what you talk about, how you spend your time? A couple of weeks ago Jo reminded us on his final Sunday of Paul's words in Colossians 3:17

Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Is this your settled determination and greatest joy?

Consciously build your life on Christ through the power of his Spirit at work within you.

### **How is the building of the church progressing?**

We have recently completed the renovation of our main church building. It has been done beautifully and attractively and has made it into a flexible space to serve the community of the parish and beyond.

But the church of God is not a building of stone or wood, it is a people living in relationship with God and with each other. How is the building of this church progressing? Are we growing in knowledge and love of our Lord? Are we growing in love for, forgiveness of and encouragement of one another? Is the presence of God among us evident to those who come in to meet with us? How can we each be engaged in nurturing the life of the church – the life of Christ by his Spirit within the church? Are we building upon the foundation of Christ and building well?

### **What are we looking for in leaders of the church?**

A couple of weeks ago we said farewell to Jo. We are grateful to God that we have other capable leaders who are not yet ready to retire. But we shall be beginning the process of looking for Jo's successor.

What are we looking for? It's not primarily about human personality, it's about Christ. We need someone who is Christ centred, Christ preoccupied, Christ glorifying, Christ proclaiming. We need someone who will be an able co-worker with God in the building of his kingdom on the foundation of Christ; one who will lead us, encourage us and work with us in building a temple fitting for the dwelling place of God by his Spirit.

Let's get engaged with the kingdom building project of our God and of our precious Saviour. Let's pray and work to this end.

Peter Misselbrook, Christ Church Downend 11/7/2021