

The Only Solid Foundation

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Date: 20 September 2026

Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0:00] So, that's been enough waggling on the T. Good golf phrase that one, isn't it? For you to have got Matthew 7 open in front of you, verse 21.

Now, we've got it open. We're going to read it in about five minutes' time together. And this is what we're going to hear. We're going to hear Jesus tell Lois and Hannah that they've made the wisest decision that they'll ever make in their lives.

And maybe just to get us into this today, let me tell you about what is, for me, one of the most bizarre shows that's on television at the minute. See if you agree, it's a BBC series based up on West Sands Beach in St. Andrews.

And it's called Race Against the Tide. Has anyone seen this? Race Against the Tide? Does anyone love this? I'm glad to see there's no hands there. I find it so bizarre. Can I tell you why I find it so bizarre?

Because I think you can describe this at best as a glorified sandcastle making contest. Right? And while some of the efforts on it are, truth be told, pretty amateur, some of the efforts, I think you'll agree, are genuinely pretty impressive.

[1:24] Do you see that? But here's the reason I find it so utterly bizarre. It's because baked into the entire premise of the show is this.

See, as good as this all looks, see if we give it an hour, none of this will be here anymore. Now, keep those sandcastles in your mind because it's how Jesus wants us to think in this passage. Now, as a church, we've been journeying through the Sermon on the Mount as we find it in Matthew's Gospel, widely considered to be not just the greatest sermon that Jesus ever preached, but also one of the greatest speeches in history, the content of which continues to reverberate down through the generations.

If you are here today, friends, and you are like so many in our culture today, longing for something tried, tested, and historic to tether your life to, then you're not going to find anything better than Jesus.

Do you see verse 28? When Jesus finishes, the listening crowd were, and see those two words beginning with A, they were amazed because this man had authority.

[2:52] Do you see it? Now, if I could paraphrase that, we've never heard anything like this before. Do you know where my first port of call is when I need an electrician?

Is to go to trusted traders. Anyone else do that? Because I want to know what other people made of his or her work.

But do you know what's so much more convincing than a good review? We've heard two of them. The stories of transformed lives.

You see, this sermon is not just Jesus giving the world some ethical top tips. What we have here is Jesus speaking about what life inside the kingdom of God looks like.

So, again, if I could paraphrase, this is what begins to happen in a human heart when Jesus grips it and changes it. And at the heart of it, we've thought about this as a church over the last number of weeks, the heart of it is this is what it means to live your life as a disciple with God as your Father.

[4:07] An identity, not that we live for, an identity that we live from. And in recent weeks, we've thought about how Jesus is the ultimate financial advisor, right?

Telling us not to store up for ourselves treasures on earth, but to invest in treasures in heaven. You say, why? Well, the reason is because of how safe and secure it is.

You store up your treasures in heaven, then vermin and moths aren't going to come and destroy it. We've also thought about how Jesus is the ultimate psychologist.

He's been telling his disciples not to worry, but to look and to consider the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and to think about the fact that if God so clothes the things that will be here today and then gone tomorrow with such beauty and intricate care, then how much more will your Father give you everything that you need?

And this morning, you might have guessed it, we're going to think about who Jesus is, the ultimate architect. Telling us to get in the ring and wrestle with this question.

[5:22] Really simply, on what are we building our lives? And at the end of the day, will it stand? So, let's read from verse 21.

If you've got it there, the verses will go on the screen. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and in your name perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you.

Away from me, you evildoers. Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew, and beat against that house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

[6:37] But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew, and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority and not as their teachers of the law.

And God will bless the reading of his word to us today. And so here is Jesus, friends. He's not just wrapping up the Sermon on the Mount. What he's doing is he's bringing it to the boil.

And what I mean by that is that his closing appeal in true Sesame Street style is brought to you by the number two. Right? And we track back just a little bit, if you follow it with me.

He's talked about how we cannot serve two masters. Do you remember this from a few weeks ago? Last week we saw him talk about how the fact that there are two gates, which lead to two paths, which those paths lead to two destinations.

[7:59] And he's talked about how two fruits fall from the lives of true and false prophets. And today we're going to hear him talk about two pronouncements and building our lives on one of two foundations.

And here's the point, I think. You know how we talk in our culture about sitting on the fence?

Friends, according to Jesus, that is not a category.

According to him, we are all one or the other. And here's his compassionate pitch. We need to base the entirety of our lives on his words.

In other words, we need to base our lives on the Bible. And to make that point, Jesus says two things to us. And if you're not taken, here's your first point of two.

This is verses 21 to 23. First thing he says to us is, baseless confessions are worthless. Now, many commentators, when you read it, they class these verses as some of the hardest words of Jesus found anywhere in the New Testament.

[9:18] And see, when you take it in, it is not difficult to get your head around why they come to that conclusion, especially when you take in verse 23.

Do you see it there? Get your eyes on it. Which can feel a bit like when someone famous, I don't know, say an American president, posts something in social media and you think to yourself, you really could have done this somebody just proofreading that before you sent it.

Do you see it though? Verse 22. It reads like that. Jesus is talking about how people will come to him on, and notice that phrase, that day.

And we've got to do business with what he means by that day. He's talking about the final day of judgment. When he returns as king, and when he establishes his kingdom, and when he judges every human being who has ever lived.

Dear friends, Jesus speaks about the realities of heaven and of hell more than any other topic when you read about him in the Gospels. And his warning is not the antithesis of love.

[10:36] His warning is the expression of love. And look at what these people coming to Jesus on that day have done. Lord, Lord, they say.

Notice the double there. Didn't we, and have a look at this list. Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we drive out demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?

So these people turn up to Jesus on that day thinking that they hold the equivalent of a religious royal flush. Of course we're in. And I think we don't actually agree.

It's quite the CV, isn't it? And yet Jesus says unequivocally, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.

Now, can we put this down to Jesus just having what we would call an off day? Friends, I want to suggest that there's really good news that we can.

[11:40] I think our problem is that so often we're tempted to construct a Jesus in our minds after our own image. And we just naturally conclude that Jesus, if he's going to be like anything, he must just be like a more, a kind of better version of us, a kind of us on our best form.

A smooth edges Jesus, a more marketable Jesus. Come on, if we're going to try and take this message to the masses, then maybe we can work on your PR image. And friends, that only goes to show how shallow our understanding is of our human sin problem.

And of the holiness of our creator. Friends, here is the real Jesus. Here is the lives for the glory of his father, Jesus.

Here is, because of that, takes sin deadly seriously, Jesus. Let me ask you, is the vision you have in your mind of Jesus as plain speaking as this?

Because that's the word that Matthew uses. He told them plainly. We love straight shooters. I love a straight shooter in my life.

[12:48] Well, just tell me how it is. You ain't going to find nobody who's a straight shooter quite like Jesus. And the thing is, remember the religious ecosystem that the disciples are existing in at this point.

One that's dominated by the Pharisees. We've journeyed with these guys over the last number of months. And I can sum it up. These are the guys who, when it comes to righteousness, they talk the talk, but they do not walk the walk.

And whilst they might dupe us and they might dupe the disciples in Jesus' day, Jesus sees straight through them. And that's good news.

Is it not good news? We thought about the bad news. This is the good news. For maybe you're here today and this is exactly your problem with church. It's all show. It's no substance.

Maybe you were burnt by somebody years ago who you looked at and you thought just hypocrite.

Maybe you see the stories on the news that make you just recoil and you're repulsed by it.

[13:51] Are you not grateful for a Jesus like this? It seems to me that when we read the New Testament that Jesus reserves some of his harshest words for the religious hypocrite.

And here's the heart of it. According to Jesus, friends, there's a world of difference between naming him and knowing him. And on that day, the question that Jesus will ask each of us is not did we believe in him, nor even will it be what did we do for him, but rather did our lives testify to the fact that we knew him, that responding to his love for us, shown in dying for our sins on the cross, we responded in love for him.

And in turn, that love moved us through the spirit living inside us to want to obey his every word.

And the spirit inside us produced sermon on the mount shaped fruit.

You know, it's recorded that during the Welsh revival that happened in the early 1900s, that the locals used to say, and this is documented, that you could tell when a man had become a Christian who worked down the mine.

And do you know how? It was how they saw he treated his pet pony. And it's in the context of that challenge that the comfort for the everyday disciple is found.

[15:26] Because what does Jesus say to those of us who don't feel anything special, for whom every day kind of feels the same, for every battle daily with sin makes us weary, and yet flowing from that baseline of faith, there is that real childlike desire to want to follow Jesus.

What does Jesus say? Just notice it there. On that day, Jesus will say, welcome into my kingdom. Enter my kingdom.

Friends, can I suggest life is full of words worth living for? Again, we talk like that, don't we? You know, the kind of things, words worth living for. I love you. You passed.

You're hired. Good job. Well done. Can I suggest, and Lois and Hannah, here's a thought for you. Can I suggest that there are no greater words to live for than to hear Jesus say to us on that day,

enter my kingdom?

Which takes us to the second thing Jesus says in this passage. Friends, first of all, baseless confessions are worthless, but here's the second thing. Solid foundations are priceless. And don't miss the subtle emphasis of this parable.

[16:41] I think we're so often, we have turned it into a kid's song, which is absolutely fine that we sometimes miss where the emphasis is. Jesus' central question here is not, what are we building our lives with?

This is not Jesus' version of the tale of the three little pigs. Right? I'll huff, I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down. Don't mishear me.

That's an important question to ask in life, but it's not the primary question that we're meant to ask from this parable. Jesus' question is not, what are you building your life with? Jesus' question is what?

What are you building your life on? You see it? And let's be honest, if anyone is able to tap into and relate to this parable, it's the Scots. Rain, floods, wind, or as we call it, nine months of the year, right?

But who's up first in this parable? You've got to see it. Who's up first? The wise man, verse 25. Where does he build? He builds his house on the rock. And what happens when the elements batter that house?

[17:46] His house stands. Why? Was it a good house? Don't know. Reason in this parable, why did it stand? It was built on the rock.

Wise, says Jesus. Wise. Second man, whoever, built his house on the sand. And again, just think about that. What a place to be when the sun is shining.

Imagine having that. Here's your house, right on the seafront. Sea views. Ocean smell. The calming lull of the waves coming and going. This is a holiday house owner's dream, is it not?

The selling agent won't have to work hard to create heat on this one. And yet, what is it that exposes what it has been built on? When those same storms come, and don't miss how emphatic Jesus' words are at verse 27.

If there was a sound effect for this, your choice here would be symbol, wouldn't it? Down with a great crash. It's emphatic. And let's be honest, this is not how we naturally think.

[18:59] We love our property shows. We love homes under the hammer. We love love at our list. We love grand designs. We celebrate good buildings. Alex and I went to Chicago last year.

We went on an architectural boat tour, and it felt like the theme of the boat tour was like the opposite of limbo. This was not how low can you go. This was how high can you go.

So we're looking at these buildings, thinking what magnificent buildings. We go mad for it. But do you know what's never going to be a TV show anytime soon? Great foundations.

Look at this concrete. It's amazing, is it not? Have you ever seen cement like that? And yet, is this not exactly what Jesus is saying in this passage that we need to be thinking about?

Do you see how according to Jesus, it's not how impressive looking your house is that matters. It is how strong your foundation is that matters. Do you see it? And so the question that hangs in the air is this.

[20:03] Are you going to remain foolish? Or are you going to become wise? And so you ask yourself, how do I become wise?

Verse 24, Jesus says, wise people are those who hear my words and put them into practice. What is Jesus after?

He's after hearers and doers of his words. And that's not just a solid foundation. Friends, you've got to see, Jesus is emphatic and he says it in binary terms.

This is the only solid foundation. And so here's what it's been about all along. To build your life upon the rock, to be wise, equals to be a hearer and doer of Jesus' words.

Now let me just really quickly do two points of application just as we begin to wrap this up. One is a narrow lens application and the question is this, what is your foundation today on this day?

[21:09] Because our world serves up a banquet of good things. But what we do, what our hearts do is that we take those good things that are gifts from God and that we make them into our God things.

But the thing about those kind of things, the good things, they're good things, but they make for terrible foundations. Give you an example of this. I've been reading the autobiography of Ronnie

O'Sullivan recently and he's talking about how chaotic his life was when he was at his peak and this is what he says.

He says, massive highs, massive lows. That was always how it was for me. It's no way to live your life out in those emotional extremes. I'm playing well, I'm buzzing, right, we're all going out tonight, we're going there, there and everywhere, drinks on me, who's coming, but I'm playing badly, no bouncing my step, no gliding around the table, feeling heavy now, I'm not a panther, I'm a bear, lumpy, grumpy, hair and ugly.

But it's really relatable, is it not? When you base your life on something that is not Jesus' words, substitute snooker for any word of your choice. Career, finding a spouse, property ladder, success, grades, friends, good things, but terrible foundations.

If we base ourselves on these things, then at some point or another, they will fold like a pack of cards and the wind will just take it away. It's not amazing this week where one or two experts talk about the dangers of AI and all of a sudden a stock market is sent into panic.

[22:45] How fragile the things are that we so often base our lives upon. And the thing is, what's going to expose what our lives are built upon according to this parable?

It's a storm. You know, I used to have a family friend called Martin, grew up with Martin and I remember as a young teen, Martin was much older than us, going to Glasgow airport one night with my mum and seeing Martin coming towards us in the distance and before he got to us, my mum gave me a wee nudge and just told me that this guy had been made redundant recently.

Mortgage to pay, two kids to care for, young family to feed, and Martin gets to us and my mum says, I'm sorry to hear about your news and Martin says, it's okay, the Lord knows my needs.

And I thought, it's that really impressionable young teenager. See, when I grow up, I want to be like that because see when the storms come and they'll come, what's inside of us will come out.

It's just like a sponge, isn't it? What's in the sponge when you squeeze it will come out. Friends, what if in the storms of life what came out of us were Jesus' words and his promises.

[24:07] That blew my little mind. But years later, I read Psalm 112 and it hit me that this was Martin. Psalm 112, celebrating God's faithful people.

They will have no fear of bad news. Their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord. words. And if that's the narrow lens, friends, think about the things that you're basing your life upon.

Here's the wide lens really quickly. Where is your foundation going to be exposed as being on that day? And I think that's where the emphasis in this parable really is because the wind and the waves and the storms all the way through the Bible story, those things symbolize God's judgment.

And all of us will have to give an account before King Jesus. And either we are paying for our sin and rebellion against a holy God or we're trusting that Jesus took the punishment for us on the cross and our lives are now united to him in his death and resurrection.

And if you know the Bible story, you might pick up some serious echoes here of the story of Noah.

And if you know that story, where was the only safe place to be when the floods came?

[25:29] The only safe place to be was on the ark. And so many biblical commentators have noticed the link down the years that the ark is in miniature form another picture of what Jesus was going to do as he died on the cross and he rose again.

On judgment day, where is the only safe place to be on the ark who is Christ. And so friends, do you see what Jesus offers us here?

On that day, this is the only place to be safe. Here is a foundation stronger than cancer. Here is a foundation stronger than depression.

Here is a foundation stronger than dementia. Here is a foundation stronger than a stroke. Here is a foundation stronger than diabetes.

Here is a foundation stronger than death. friends, our world celebrates the strong, resilient, and utterly independent person.

[26:44] Turns out that Jesus celebrates the weak, unimpressive, and yet totally dependent on him person. So here is the plea. Trade your sandcastle life existence and come and build your life on the solid foundation that is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

And maybe even for some of us today, you could do this for the first time. come to him. Come to him and know life.

You know, friends, just as we close, can I tell you about something I've got on my CV that I really should at the age of 41 ditch? It's the fact that when I was 11, I got awarded the prize of being the

best boy at Boys Brigade.

And my time at Boys Brigade taught me three things that I've carried through life. Number one, how to play crab football. Number two, how to hustle at a tuck shop.

But number three, a hymn that we used to have to sing just about every single time that we met.

And the whole point was that they taught you this hymn because it was this parable in miniature.

[28:11] And it was this hymn that was going to be the advice that they wanted to give you to carry through the rest of your days whatever would come your way in life. And can I read you it out as we close? It goes like this.

will your anchor hold in the storms of life? When the clouds unfold their wings of strife? When the strong tides lift and the cables strain?

Will your anchor drift or firm remain? We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll.

Fastened to the rock which cannot move grounded firm and deep in the saviour's love. Let me pray.

And so Father we thank you for celebrating today the fact that you are the giver of all good things.

That you are the gracious God slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Thank you for sending your son. Thank you that he willingly came.

[29:30] We see him here holding out the offer of life. The same Jesus would go to the cross. He would verifiably die. He would rise again. He's at your right hand.

One day he's returning. Thank you that there is no story like that. And so Father I pray that whatever's going on in our hearts today Father wherever we're at in terms of our walk with you Lord that you by your spirit would be bringing that sense of comfort and challenge and that wonderful knowledge of Jesus and his love for us.

So Father thank you thank you for today the privilege of being able to gather and to hear stories about how you do transform lives. And Lord as we finish our time together Lord may you continue to work amongst us.

We pray all of these things confidently in Jesus' worthy name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.