

Matthew 7:15-29

In our sermon today, we are going to start out by looking at the **construction** industry. Most of you probably know a number of people from our community, or the surrounding area, who are involved in the various **phases** of that industry, and hopefully my information will not **conflict** with theirs. In order to be a **wise** builder, you need to have at least a basic knowledge of both **construction** and **architecture**. A **wise** builder keeps informed regarding the latest building **materials** which are on the market. He keeps up to date on all the building **codes** and **restrictions** which exist in the communities where he plans to build. He is well supplied with the **tools** of his trade, as well as with the **workers** to put those tools to good use. Overall, the construction industry is pretty **complicated** in our world today, and only the **best** are successful on a **large** scale.

As we explore the construction industry in our sermon today, we're going to see that Jesus wasn't really talking about building **buildings**. Rather, He was talking about building **lives**. And just like any builder of **buildings**, as we build our **lives** we need to be aware of all the different **phases** which are involved in the process - the building **designs**, the building **structures**, the building **materials**, the building **codes**, and the building **tools**. However we also need to be aware that we are only **sub**-contractors in this process, for the Bible tells us, "*Every house is built by someone, and God is the one who built everything.*" Our text today encourages each of us to **Be A Wise Builder** of our lives - making use of God's **design**, God's **structure**, God's **materials**, God's **codes**, and God's **tools**.

Now as simple and straight-forward as that advice sounds, all of you realize that it's not that **simple**. It's not **easy** to **Be A Wise Builder** of lives, and the difficulties began to show themselves already back in the Garden of **Eden**, and the difficulties which **Adam** and **Eve** faced in their family life. As you well know, God had made Adam the **head** of his family, giving him all the **privileges** and **responsibilities** which go along with that position. And because God saw that Adam could not survive on his **own**, He made **Eve** to be Adam's **helper**, providing her with the ability to **love** and **support** her God-given husband, and giving her all the **comfort** and **security** which go along with that position. And yet, they **messed up** - they fell victim to Satan's **temptation**, and they fell into **sin**. They did not turn out to be very **Wise Builders**. So, in order for **us** to **Be Wise Builders**, we're going to need some **help** - **lots** of help. And in our text today, Jesus Himself provides us with the answers. He said, "*Everyone who hears these words of mine, and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on bedrock.*"

Here Jesus **teaches** us how to build **lives**, by **reminding** us of how to build **buildings**. He starts at the very beginning with the **foundation**. There were two men in Jesus' story - one **wise**, and one **foolish**. The wise man recognized that he was only a **beginner**, so he looked for some **help**. And apparently, he got some pretty good **advice**. The experts told him that in order to have a **strong** building, he would need to have a firm **foundation**. So, he took a lot of **time**, and dug **deep** down into the ground, until he found **solid bedrock**. It was only **then** that he began to build his **house**. On the **other** hand, the **foolish** man was anxious to move ahead with his life **quickly**. So, he didn't **bother** to take the time to seek any **advice**. Why, he didn't even **think about** providing a **foundation** for his house. He just looked **around**, picked out a nice **flat** spot next to a **river**, and started to **build**.

The wise man built his house on **bedrock** - a **firm, solid, and immovable** foundation. That foundation for our lives is **Jesus** and His **Word**. By using God's Word as the foundation upon which we build our lives, those lives will be **strong** and **prosperous**. How do **I** know? Because **Jesus** said so. Concerning the **wise** builder Jesus said, *"The **rain** came down, the **rivers** rose, and the **winds** blew and beat against that house. But it **did not** fall, because it was founded on **bedrock**."*

Notice that the **storms** of life come into **everyone's** life, both the wise **and** the foolish, and regardless of the **foundation** or **lack** of one. Christians are by no means **exempt** from earthly trials and tribulations. Those problems can come in all kinds of **shapes** and **sizes** - various **tragedies**, **car** accidents, **cancer** cells, **tornadoes**, **marriage** problems, **financial** troubles - even **divine calls**. The waters of life are **deep**, the winds are **strong**, and the rocks are **craggy**. But the wise man built his life on **bedrock** - on the solid foundation of **Jesus** - and what he built **survived** the storms of life.

Faith in **Jesus** is the first and most important **ingredient** in **Being A Wise Builder**. And in our text today, Jesus also gives us some very practical insights on how we can tell if our faith is **real**, or if we are only **deceiving** ourselves. Do you **remember** what He said? *"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** in heaven."* Jesus tells us that faith is **more** than just putting a religious **veneer** on our lives. It was Jesus Himself who asked, *"Why do you **call** me, 'Lord, Lord,' and **do not do** what I say?"* Jesus wasn't **impressed** by the people who said all the right things on the **outside**, but had nothing worthwhile on the **inside**. People got Jesus' attention when they **followed through** on their words with **actions**.

The same thing is true when **we** say that we want to **Be Wise Builders** of our

lives. That's what **everybody** says. The **difference** in people shows up in the kind of **materials** we **choose** to do that building. **One** builder will choose to use God's **Word** and the **Sacraments** - understanding that it is through **God alone** that there can be **any** success in our earthly lives - and wanting to give glory to **God** for providing us with **forgiveness** for our sins, **strength** for our lives, and **salvation** for all eternity. **Another** builder will **reject** what God says in His Word, and will choose instead to use building materials readily found in the **world** to build up his life - things like accumulating **possessions**, having **power** over or **prestige** among other people, seeking instant **gratification** for a variety of perceived needs, and abusing **alcohol** and other **drugs** to escape from the realities of life. Both people **say** that they want to **Be Wise Builders**, but only the **first** one - the one who looks for his happiness and success in **God** - can truly be considered **wise**.

And that brings us to **you**. You **also** say that you want to **Be Wise Builders** of your lives. But **how** will you **build** that life? You have already been **blessed** with a firm and solid **foundation** for your life through your **baptism**, and instruction in God's **Word**. That gets you off to a great **start**. But how will you proceed with building the **superstructure** of your life? I'd like to read for you the words of an article I read a while back, which expresses 8 different **blessings** from a **friend** - as well as the **reason behind** each of those blessings. I think they are particularly **fitting** as we look back on the past couple of **months**, and consider the feelings we've gone through during the corona virus **pandemic**, as well as the more recent outbreak of **rioting, arson, and looting** all over the world. I consider **every** member of this congregation to be my **friend**, so these words express some of the blessings which I would wish for **all** of you, as you strive to **Be Wise Builders** of your lives. The article reads:

“What would I wish for you, dear friend?

1. Just enough **experience** seasoned with **heartache**, so that you can separate **dreams** from **illusions**.
2. **Denial** touched with **indifference**, so that you will always try **harder**, struggle just a little **more** to reach your goal or to taste victory.
3. Hard **work**, and **lots** of it, so that you might grow blisters on your **hands**, but not on your **attitudes**.
4. **Defeat**, occasionally, in order that your backbone may be **stiffened**, and your emotional muscles **strengthened**.
5. **Need**, so that you will never be afraid to reach out to others for **help**, nor will fail to comprehend that **others** may have need of **you**.
6. **Frustration** in order that you will have to begin **again**, to pick up the shattered **pieces**, and know what it is to have to start **over**.

7. **Fear** - fear of **competition**, fear of **weakness**, and fear of **failure**, so that you will always avoid the destructive **B's** - being **boastful**, **blasé**, and **bored** - and finally
8. **Faith**, so that you will wrap yourself in **God** as your security blanket.

No, I haven't offered you the **easy** path, nor have I tossed out **pretty** phrases to **compliment** or **win** you. But then again, **friendship** is telling it like it **is**. And life is **made** of these things which I have **offered** you. The test is whether you can **take** it, or **not**."

My dear friends, by the **grace** of God we **can** take it. We have the **knowledge**, the **materials**, the **codes**, and the **tools** to **Be Wise Builders** of our lives. With the **LORD** working **in** us and **through** us, may we always build our lives on the firm foundation of **Jesus Christ**. May we **strengthen** those lives as we hear His Word **faithfully** and **frequently** - and most important of all, may we never fail to put His Word into **practice** as we **live** our lives for **God's** glory. Amen.