

The Foundation on the Rock
Luke 6:37-49
April 11, 2021
Rev. Dave Dorst
CenterPoint Church

Read Luke 6:37-49

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Introduction: The Importance of a Good Foundation

I once took a church group to Juarez, Mexico for a week to help an organization called “Casas por Cristo,” which means “Houses for Christ.” Our main job was to build a house in 3 days for a family there that didn’t have solid housing. It was amazing that a dozen unskilled laborers, mostly teenagers could accomplish this, but the mission group had it down to a science and walked us through it, and we did it. I’ll never forget our group balking at the idea of spending the entire first day pouring concrete for the foundation; we thought, surely the foundation goes quickly and we’ll need way more time to build the walls, the roof, the structure of the house. But, no, it took the entire first day to get the foundation right, and after that, construction on the rest went fairly quickly. When a house or a building gets built, oftentimes it’s frustrating waiting for signs of the structure to go up. But it’s essential that the builders get the foundation right before they start constructing on top of that. In 2012, in Ghana’s capital city, Accra, a 5-story building collapsed upon itself nine months after it was built, killing 9 people and trapping 75 people inside the rubble. Investigators were sent to determine the ultimate cause of the collapse, and they determined that the problem was all in the foundation.¹

A building’s foundation is as essential as it sounds. If the foundation is not solid, it doesn’t matter how well-built the rest of the house is, how nice the drywall is hung, how fancy the brick or siding is, how nicely decorated it gets. If the foundation has problems, you’ll end up with costly repairs or worse, a building collapse. If the foundation is solid, you can proceed with the rest of the house with confidence. If that’s our approach to houses, how much more should it be the approach for our lives? Our spiritual lives have the same principle. We must have a sturdy foundation that holds when storms come and the assaults on our lives and faith begin. Our sermon passage today is a series of teachings from Jesus showing His people how to build solid foundations in their lives. The first thing we’ll see in the opening 6 verses is that...

I. Addressing Your Own Sins is Foundational (vv. 37-42)

³⁷ “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

³⁹ He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.

¹ <https://news.yahoo.com/news/bad-foundation-blamed-ghana-building-collapse-124537336.html>

If you've seen the TV show "The Office," you know the Christian character, Angela, the holier-than-thou accountant who always has a negative word for her co-workers. One of her memorable lines was, "I actually look forward to performance reviews... I really enjoy being judged. I believe I hold up well to even severe scrutiny." And the audience laughs because they know her as the woman who judges everyone else. But what's not so funny is that very few people like to be judged. We don't like to be severely scrutinized and criticized.

We often hear that first phrase "*Judge not and you will not be judged*" used as a way to rebuke Christians from saying that any behavior is wrong. One of the worst things to be in our modern culture is someone who judges someone else's personal choices. And yet, the internet is a pretty harsh place where judgment is doled out quickly and mercilessly. These admonitions of Jesus not to judge or condemn are directed at those who have critical spirits, who are constantly finding faults in others, putting their motives in the worst possible light, and thriving on running others down. He was calling out the Pharisees, but He was also reminding us that that is an easy default attitude for you and me. This section is about having a generous posture towards others. Rather than being the ones who judge and condemn others, our gut reaction to people should be to "believe the best" (as 1 Cor. 13 says) and to be free with forgiveness. When someone cuts in line or accidentally bumps into you, is your first reaction anger and a desire to tell them off? Or is it to give the person the benefit of the doubt, to allow yourself to be wronged, and to forgive? All of this teaching is still an outworking of the "Golden Rule" that Jesus taught back in verse 31 – that we treat people how we want to be treated. In not judging, in forgiving, in giving to others, we are assured that we will be treated the same way, at least by God. The measure that we use is the measure that we will receive.

Now, how do Christians avoid the sin of judgmentalism while obeying the places in the Scripture where we are told to make spiritual judgements? After all, we need to discern doctrine and theology in order to decide if it's Biblical or not. We don't just let anyone teach whatever theology they want in our church; we're not going to have ecumenical, multi-faith, universalist teaching that throws out grace alone through faith alone through Christ alone. But there's a difference between us saying, "We've discerned that is not Biblical and we are not willing to have that taught here," which is the proper way to make a spiritual judgment, versus "we are angry and hate everyone who teaches anything different from what we do" – that is the harmful version of judging. There's a difference between making spiritual judgments, which we are definitely called to, and having a judgmental spirit, which Jesus asks us to avoid.

Alisa Childers is an author with a podcast who tells the story of when she was trapped in an eating disorder that was destroying her. She had a friend who was a real people pleaser and very non-confrontational, but her friend worked up the courage to confront her about her eating disorder. Alisa did not take it well, she basically told her friend to back off and stop judging her. But her friend persisted. Did she persist because she couldn't wait to criticize her, because she loved feeling superior and holier-than-thou? Of course not, she persisted because she loved Alisa. And her "butting in" ended up saving Alisa's life. She shared her secret with her family, got counseling, and got victory over that disorder. Our spiritual judgments should lead to loving actions.²

1 Corinthians 5:12-13 reminds us of a very important principle: "*For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you.*" The context there is church discipline, holding Christians to their

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7jLcVZ9zuY>

membership standards, to behaving like followers of Jesus. The church is not the morals police of the world; Paul says God will judge the world. We should not be shocked when unbelievers act like unbelievers, and we don't really have a responsibility to correct their behavior, except in the sense that we point them to Christ.

I've been to churches where they recited verse 38 as they collected the offering: "*give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap*" because it sounds like it's a verse about giving. If that verse was by itself or in a section talking about money, that'd be fine, but I think that within this context, it's not about our tithing and how much you give to the church. It's about how we regard and treat other people.³ I didn't really understand that verse, I had a picture of the prank we used to pull at camp where we would shake up a soda and then hand it to our friend, and it would explode when he opened it. But I found out that this was a picture of a grain seller in the marketplace: the grain in the measuring container is pressed down, so that all the spaces are filled and the container holds as much as possible.⁴ It's basically saying that when you pay for a container of grain, someone who is stingy will only give what looks like a full amount of grain. But God rewards us with so much grain that it fills and then overflows the container, spilling over into your lap. Do you want to live knowing that's how God wants to reward you? Then be gracious and loving towards other people. Overflowing blessings come to those who are slow to condemn and quick to forgive.⁵

Verses 41-42 are such a brilliant word picture from Jesus; it's an image that stays with you imagining a little splinter in someone else's eye when you have a huge 2x4 in your own eye. I remember giving one of my children a mini-lecture about procrastinating and the joy of just getting right to a task and feeling the freedom that comes with finishing it early. And he looked at me and said something to the effect of, "Dad, didn't you get up at 4:30 am the other Sunday because you didn't finish your sermon during the week?" "Mind your own business, kid." It's so easy to see other's faults and overlook our own. How many times have you come away from a sermon and thought, "Man, I really hope that guy or that woman was listening, because they could really use a lot of work in that area!" How often do we see other's faults so clearly and long to correct them, but we have creative ways of excusing our own sins and flaws; they're just "our quirks that you have to get used to"? We all tend to be hard on others but understanding to ourselves. It's a mark of Christian maturity that we deal with our own sins and issues privately with God before looking around at others. We should take a page from Michael Jackson: "I'm starting with the man in the mirror, I'm asking him to change his ways."

That's not to say there is no room for correcting others, it does say that once you can see clearly and have worked on your own issues that you can help your brother with his issue. But what is the word that the Scripture uses to describe the manner in which we help our brothers and sisters deal with their sins? It's "gentleness." 2 Timothy 2:25 – the Lord's servant is to correct "*his opponents with gentleness*" and Galatians 6:1 – "*brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.*" I pray that we would be a church where we freely acknowledge our own sins but are gentle when we need to correct one another.

The next few verses deal with our inner commitments expressing themselves outwardly.

II. A Heart Committed to God is Foundational (vv. 43-45)

³ Suggested by Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke* (Nashville: Holman, 2018), p. 123.

⁴ R.H. Stein. *Luke* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), p. 212.

⁵ Darrell Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp. 192, 198.

⁴³ *“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, ⁴⁴ for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵ The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

In Matthew 12, Jesus specifically applies this idea of a bad tree producing bad fruit to the Pharisees: *“You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil?... I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned”* (Matthew 12:34a, 36-37). But since we can all devolve into Pharisees pretty easily, these words are for us as well. Jesus says that our hearts are like trees: they produce fruit that is appropriate to the kind of tree they are. Don’t expect figs from a thornbush or grapes from a bramble bush, right? Expect what those trees would naturally produce.

In the same way, listen carefully to what people talk about and you will know what is bound up in their hearts. You usually don’t have to pry hard for people to tell you what the idols in their lives are. Just engage them in conversation and find out what gets them excited. If they constantly talk about sports, music, travel, politics, climbing the corporate ladder or beautifying their home, it’s not too hard to realize that their heart and mind are constantly dwelling on those things. Good things and bad things. I knew a pastor who constantly talked about money, both the church bringing in money and his wanting to make money with various side hustles. Nothing wrong with wanting the church and your own finances to be stable, we certainly shouldn’t be fiscally irresponsible, but at some point it became very obvious that this is what he set his heart on. Because he thought about it so often, his life and his conversations were steered by that. His mouth spoke the abundance of his heart. But, of course, it’s easy for me to point out his speck and overlook the log in my eye. I get wrapped up in sports, hobbies, entertainment, and dream of travel and the easy life, and my heart forgets to seek first the Kingdom of God.

Is Jesus saying that half of the world has an evil heart and will produce evil things, and the other half has good hearts that will produce good things? No, the Scriptures testify to the fact that all of us are evil and have evil hearts from birth until the Holy Spirit changes our hearts and gives us ones that desire spiritual things. Romans 6:22 – *“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.”* When we have our hearts changed, then we start producing godly fruit. Galatians 5:22-23 are the list of what we produce, the fruits of the Spirit: *“love, joy, peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*

The final verses help us finish laying the strong foundation for our spiritual lives:

III. Obedience is Foundational (vv. 46-49)

⁴⁶ *“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built, ⁴⁹ But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”*

There is a certain strand of Christianity that says, essentially, that you can receive Jesus as your Savior but not your Lord. In other words, Jesus can secure forgiveness and eternal life for you if you believe in Him, but you’re not necessarily obligated to obey Him and do everything He says. It doesn’t take long to read through the New Testament and ask, “Where are you coming up with that

idea?" John 14:15 among many others says, *"If you love me, you will keep my commands."* Jesus' rhetorical question in verse 46 is really an accusation: you can't call me Lord and ignore what I teach you.

Jesus uses this image of a house and its foundation: if it's not built with a solid foundation, it will be destroyed in the flood, but if the foundation is solid, it will stand. In fact, Jesus says that if you don't obey Him, your spiritual house doesn't have a foundation at all. It's possible that people in church haven't faced a lot of storms in life and they may be deluded into thinking that they have a solid foundation under them. But when that first storm hits them hard, that's when they find out their house has been destroyed and their faith is not as strong as they thought it would be. This is the picture that I think of when I think of our children growing up and heading off to college and into the work world. They will be flooded, assaulted with other philosophies, worldly wisdom, people's doubts and the temptations of the world. If there is no foundation of being used to hearing from Jesus and responding in obedience, they will be washed away in the cultural flood. I've seen it happen over and over with students, they couldn't stand up to the culture's assaults and gave in because they lacked a foundation. We pray that our kids keep growing in their faith when they go away and that the Lord keeps working in their lives.

Conclusion

So we take these teachings from Jesus as a way to remind us how we can have a solid foundation to our Christian lives: by treating others with the measure we want to be treated, by fixing our hearts on godly things, and by obeying Jesus in all things. Now, what I don't want you to hear in this sermon is: It's all up to you, make sure you build your foundation. You are not saved by your obedience. The true foundation of our spiritual lives is Jesus Himself. 1 Corinthians 3:11 says, *"For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* What I've been calling foundational in these moral teachings is what Jesus wants from us: that we love Him and trust Him so much that we obey Him and work these things out in our lives, with His help. But we start with Jesus, He is the cornerstone that we build our lives upon.

I want to go back to verse 39, which we skipped over. It asks the rhetorical question *"can a blind man lead a blind man?"* And it's answered with "No, they'll both fall into a pit." It strikes me that if you want to go to heaven, you need to make sure that you are following someone who knows the way, who has been there. Otherwise, you are listening to someone who are only guessing about the way to go. You run the risk of falling into the pit if you don't follow the right person. In John 6:38, Jesus said, *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent Me."* Jesus is the only person who has come here from heaven and can show us the way there. And that way is through Him – He is the way, the truth, and the life. Believing in Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for our salvation is essential to stay out of the pit of hell and going to heaven when we die. If you want a solid foundation in your life, come to faith in Jesus Christ by believing in Him, and then obey everything that He taught in the words of the Scriptures. Amen.

Benediction

Romans 15:5,6 – *"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*