

## **BUILDING A LASTING LEGACY**

Matthew 7:24-29

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First, let me just say I am honored and deeply humbled to be your pastor and to have this special moment in the life of this church. I am grateful to my staff that has been here all morning long, to all of those who put this moment together, and for hundreds and hundreds of lay people who have made this day possible.

Once to every man and nation, comes a moment to decide. Today is a decision day for this congregation and I pray that God himself will be our guide.

When Jesus wanted to drive home a truth, he told a story. The stories that Jesus told were right out of life. Consider the lilies of the field. Look at the birds of the air. A farmer went forth to sow a crop. A merchant made a sale. So, it should come as no surprise to us that Jesus would include in his teachings a story about a carpenter, after all he was a carpenter's son. We have before us one of those precious stories that we hold from childhood about a wise man who built a house on a rock and a foolish man who built his house on the sand. Could we glean from this old but simple story some guiding wisdom for us today in this monumental moment in the life of this church? Let me suggest some gleanings that I have from this story.

**WHEN IT COMES TO BUILDING A LEGACY, A SOLID FOUNDATION IS ESSENTIAL.**

The wise man built his house on a rock and the foolish man built his house on the sand. The church has one foundation. It is Jesus Christ, her Lord.

The Lord says to the prophet Isaiah in 28:16, "Behold, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation and the one who trusts will never be dismayed."

Paul says to the church at Corinth, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." Jesus said, "On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." On Christ the solid rock we stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

Lest we forget, let us remember that what we are ultimately talking about today is not money but ministry. It is not size but service, not bricks but beliefs, not charity but Jesus Christ.

Let the banners that have led our procession proclaim our purpose - God is *touching hearts and transforming lives*. God cares that 50% of this county has no church home. God wants children to be blessed, prodigals to be welcomed, and families to be supported in the tremendous task of raising children. It is the

will of God for people everywhere to become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us open wide the gates of glory that whosoever will may come to know the Lord. Let us build a community of faith where persons are formed into the likeness of Christ for the good of the world. The world needs such a witness. Let us never forget our purpose.

#### WHEN IT COMES TO BUILDING A LEGACY, EACH PIECE IS IMPORTANT.

There is an old fable about a little nail on the roof of a church that started feeling unimportant and unappreciated. So, on a hot, July afternoon, the nail just dropped from the shingle, slid down the roof, into the gutter, and eventually onto the ground. No one really noticed it. In fact, hardly anybody noticed when in a windstorm that summer a shingle blew away. People were busy in that church. You know how we are in church, we are busy, busy people. But the sheathing rotted from the missing shingle. As time passed the roof leaked, the ceiling sagged, the organ was damaged beyond repair, and the church got in trouble because one day a nail decided it was unimportant.

While I never ever want to try to categorize anybody, I suspect there are at least two groups of people who sit in this sanctuary today. Some of you are feeling dramatically blessed. This is an exciting day for you. You have caught it, you have lived into it and you have helped it happen. Some of you are the dreamers who first opened the window four years ago for this moment to happen. Some of you are the people who have flung open the doors of opportunity that seemed dramatically slammed shut just eighteen months ago. Today they have become a real, real possibility. Some of you are the hundreds of volunteers who have formed the committees that have brought us together for this particular time and place. You know what we are talking about today. You have lived into it, you have struggled with it, you have seen the vision, and you have responded to it in a dramatic and beautiful way.

Let me tell you something this morning. The children in our Day School collected pennies and change and made an offering today of \$640 to this campaign. The teenagers of this church have personally pledged and raised more than \$9000 for this campaign yesterday in a golf scramble. What is more, 164 households in this church have stepped forward with advance commitments 5.9 million dollars so the rest of us could believe. My dear friends, today I thank you.

How could anybody want to be any place else than to see these choirs singing. It is an absolute, thorough joy to fill this office, to be your pastor. I hope you know.

I am keenly aware today that some people are feeling bombarded by this whole emphasis. Either you were not around four years ago when it was first projected and planned or you have forgotten. Over the last five weeks you have begun to wonder what is all this about, when is all this going to cease, and how many more sermons are we going to hear? I tell you today, this is the last one.

It reminds me about a computer glitch that happened in a Chicago company that

sent out subscriptions to magazines. Because of the glitch, they sent 9,734 notices to a rancher in Powder Bluff, Colorado that his subscription to *National Geographic* magazine had expired. Some of you feel like that. It did get the ranchers attention, however. He traveled ten miles to the nearest post office and sent money for his subscription renewal along with a note that said, "I give up. Send me the magazine."

I wish I had the opportunity to sit down with every one of you and share my heart. Since that is not possible, let me share with you what I have shared with many others. This is a spiritual moment in this church. I ask you to do only one thing and that is to seek God's will for your response. That is the only important thing today. Discern and discover what it is God is leading you to do in this prayerful, reflective moment in this church. When you have done that, whatever you do will be exactly right.

The second thing I ask you to do is to pray for me. I am far from perfect. Pray for this church that its glorious past will continue to be a bright and fruitful future.

The third thing I want you to know today is how critically important you are to the whole. You see, each piece is important. You may feel like you are a nail in a shingle of a building, but you are as critical as any floor joists of any construction that has ever been made. When it comes to building a lasting legacy, every piece is important.

**WHEN IT COMES TO BUILDING A LEGACY, INVEST IN THE THINGS THAT LAST.**

The rains come, the floods rise, and the winds blow. Only lives that are built on a rock stand the test of time.

Criminologists tell us that no one enters and exits a room without leaving something of themselves behind - a hair, a thread of clothing, a fingerprint, a footprint or some other clue of their DNA - allowing the perceptive inspector to identify the person's presence and purpose of being there. My dear friends, by the sovereign will of God, you and I have been brought together for a moment such as this. Never have I known that so deeply in my soul as I do today. All of my life has been a preparation for this time in this church. If you had two hours, I could tell you how the Lord has shaped, guided, directed, changed, slammed doors and opened others that you and I would be here today. I ask you, how are we going to be remembered?

A newly appointed pastor stepped into a third grade Sunday School classroom early one Sunday morning. As he looked around the room he happened to see a little plastic church. It was a bank by which they collected their Sunday School offering. Remembering that bank, and some of us already have an image of it from our Sunday School days, he picked it up and in a moment of nostalgia began to remember how his mother and daddy had brought him to Sunday School, how he had been taught the faith, how day by day his life had unfolded according to

God's will. In the midst of his nostalgia he failed to notice the student who walked in for class. The student, who did not recognize the pastor, walked up to him and said, "Be careful, sir, you've got our church in your hands."

I say to you, my dear brothers and sisters, let's be careful today. We've got God's church in our hands. Amen.











