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St. John's Lutheran Church, Burlington
Second Sunday of Pentecost
Matthew 7:15-29

If you want to know what the weather is going to be like on any given day, you look on the radar and if you see a big red blob on the radar you know that a storm is coming. Friends, when we look at the radar of God's word, we see that a storm is coming. God's weather men have warned us about this storm. God's weathermen like the prophet Joel who said, **"Sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming."** (Joel 2:1) Or like John the Baptist who said earlier in the Gospel of Matthew, **"The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire ... He will gather his wheat into the barn and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."** (Matt 3:10, 12) Or the apostle Paul who said, **"God has set a day when he will judge the world by the man he has appointed."** (Acts 17:31) And finally God's weatherman Peter said, **"But the day of the LORD will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare."** (2 Peter 3:10). All of the weathermen are agreed. A storm is coming. And so the question is, "Since you know a storm is coming, what foundation are you going to build your life on, so that you survive the storm?" And what our Gospel for today tells us is that **Jesus is the foundation which will survive the storm.**

Jesus says, ²⁴ **"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. ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."**

This paragraph is the end of the Sermon on the Mount. When people first heard the Sermon on the Mount, what amazed them most about it was the remarkable authority with which Jesus spoke. There are several things which Jesus says that cause you to ask, "Who is Jesus?" For example, a regular pastor gets up in the pulpit and says, "This is what God says." Jesus gets up in the pulpit in the Sermon on the Mount and says, "This is what I say." For example, in Matthew chapter 5 Jesus says, **"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** (Matt 5:27-28) A regular preacher gets up in the pulpit and says, "This is what God says." Jesus gets up in the pulpit and says "This is what I say." And of course that would be blasphemous except for the fact that Jesus is God. He's the second person of the Trinity, God the Son. Because Jesus is God, **Jesus is the foundation which will survive the storm.**

There are other false and sandy foundations which will not survive the storm. One false and sandy foundation is the one which says, "I'm a pretty good person and God will let me into heaven on that basis." Before the Apostle Paul because a Christian, he also built on that foundation. And if anybody could have survived the storm on the basis of his good life, it would have been Paul. He says in Philippians chapter 3. **"If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless."** (Phil 3:4-6) Paul thought that he had a strong foundation based on his good life. But when he met Jesus on the Road to Damascus Paul realized that that foundation was sand. **"⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in^[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ."** (Phil 3:7-9)

When God comes on Judgment Day his demands are going to be that you have no sin and that you have a life of perfect righteousness, that you've done everything perfectly right your whole life. And when you see those demands, your good life which you thought was such a firm foundation now looks like a foundation of sand.

So how are any of us going to survive the storm if God's demands are that we have no sin and that we have a life of perfect righteousness? Well in Matthew chapter 20 Jesus said, "**The Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many**" (Matt 20:28). And in the upper room Jesus said, "**This is my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.**" (cf. Matt 26:28; Luke 22:20) On the cross Jesus took the sins that we deserve because of our sins. The punishment for sin is banishment from God's presence. In our passage for today Jesus says, "**Away from me, you evildoers.**" (Matt 7:23) On the cross Jesus said, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me**" (Matt 27:46). You and I deserve to be banished from God's presence but Jesus was banished from God's presence in our place. Jesus took the punishment for our sins. And his blood forgives all our sins. *The cross of Christ* is the foundation which will survive the storm.

Not only did God put all of your sins on Jesus, he also credited Jesus' righteousness to you as a gift. That was Paul's foundation: **the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.** Our good works will not survive the storm. But Christ's righteousness will survive the storm. Make Christ's righteousness your foundation.

Another example of a sandy foundation which will not survive the storm is the thought, "Since God's forgiveness is completely free, then I can sin all I want." That's a sandy foundation. Jesus says, "**everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock ... 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.**" (Matt 7:24,26) "These words of mine" are the Sermon on the Mount. And in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said things like, "**Love your enemies.**" (Matt 5:44) He told us not to hold grudges (5:23-24; 14-15) and not to get absorbed in wealth (6:24-34). These are the words which Jesus tells us to put into practice.

Yes forgiveness is free. The Bible says that "**we are justified freely by his grace**" (Romans 3:24). When God's radical grace gets ahold of your heart, it changes your heart. Jesus just gave us the kingdom of heaven! He said it's yours. Take it. That makes me care much less about my money. Just give it to the poor. I have the kingdom of heaven.

I offended the King of the universe and instead of banishing me from his presence he sent his Son to die. How can I hold anything against anybody? Do you see how radical grace changes you from a thornbush into a tree which produces all kinds of fruit?

With Jesus as your foundation you be able to stand firm in the midst of any storm of life. You'll be able to stand in God's great judgment. And with Jesus as your foundation you'll be able to thrive producing fruit from now into eternal life. Amen.