

Morning Service 22nd January 2023

Call to worship & Prayer

Quiet time

- **Hymn** – ‘Be bold, be strong’ WF 9
‘My God is so big’ WF 74

Prayers – Thanks and Lord’s Prayer

Talk - Wise and Foolish Builders

- **Hymn** – ‘The wise man built his house upon the rock’
Children leave for Sunday Club

Offering

Prayer

Readings – Matt 7: 24-29; Ps 18: 1-3; Ps 62: 5-8

- **Hymn** – ‘My hope is built on nothing less’ WF 73

Talk 2 – Storms

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HROSwkRwpPI> from minute 1:15 to end only

- **Hymn** – ‘In Christ alone’ WF 43

POI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22WoEYfuZN0>

Blessing

Call to worship & Prayer

Come, now is the time to worship. Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship. Come, just as you are before Your God. Come.

Quiet time

- **Hymn** – ‘Be bold, be strong’ WF – 9
‘My God is so big’ WF - 74

Prayers – Thanks and Lord’s Prayer

Loving God, we have come together to thank and praise You.

Thank You for the way You have led us through the good times and the not-so good times this week.

Thank You for being with us when we’ve been really happy, and when we’ve been really disappointed or upset.

Thank You that whatever each day is like for us, You are always with us, always loving us.

We praise You that even when we do or say or think things that make You a little bit sad, You are always ready to forgive us when we are sorry. Your love for us is like a great big, cosy hug, thank You.

Lord, we join our voices now as we say the family prayer together (up on screen) saying:

Amen.

Talk - Wise and Foolish Builders

If you had to cross a stream, with the water flowing really fast, rushing past you, do you think it would be better to put your feet on a stepping stone that was wibbly wobbly, or on nice, big solid, rock that didn’t move?

Or if you were out walking and a storm came along, with the wind howling, and the rain lashing, do you think it would be better to stay outdoors and battle the storm, or run to a handy nearby, strong castle or fortress, and be safe inside till the storm went away?

And what would happen if Mum said to you, ‘It’s raining hard outside, put your coat on please.’ and you said, ‘Yes Mum,’ then forget what she’s said and go out without your coat, in the pouring rain? You’d get very wet!!

Some of the people who listened to Jesus’ teaching were like that too, and it made Him very sad. In our bible story today, Jesus had spent a long while teaching the people all sorts of wonderful things, given them lots of ways to live their lives better, but He knew some of them would go away and forget all about what He’d said, not doing what He’d told them, and that would make their lives not so good, like you if you’d not listened to Mum and gone out without your coat.

So, Jesus told them this story, we can read it in Matthews gospel, chapter 7. (Actions):

Jesus said to the people, anyone who listens to my words and does what I ask them is like a Wise Builder who built a house.

On solid rock. He dug the foundations deep down to the rock.

Then he measured carefully, and built brick by brick, until

He had finished his house, hoorah!! And he went inside for a nice cup of tea.

But then, a great storm came. The wind howled upon that house. The rain lashed upon that house. The floods came up to that house. But the house didn’t budge an inch, it stayed strong and secure, on the rock. Phew!

Jesus then said to the people, anyone who listens to my words and doesn't do what I ask but forgets all about them is like a Foolish Builder who built a house. On the beach. He measured carefully, and built brick by brick, until He had finished his house, hoorah!! And he went inside for a nice cup of tea. But then, a great storm came. The wind howled upon that house. The rain lashed upon that house. The floods came up to that house. And the house on the sand crumpled with a great crash and was washed clean away.

I think I'd prefer to be like the Wise builder wouldn't you? to listen to what Jesus tells us in the Bible, and do the things He asks us to do. That way, when life is a bit unhappy or difficult, we know we have the wonderful love of the Lord helping us through it.

- **Hymn** – 'The wise man built his house upon the rock' WF
Children leave for Sunday Club – pray for them

Offering

Dear Lord God,
There are many in our community who are facing storms of need. We ask Lord, that You will take these gifts and use them to fill some of those needs, bringing some drops of Your peace and helping them through their storms.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Prayer

This week is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Rom 12: 4-6 says:

'Just as our bodies have many parts, each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body, the Church. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other in His grace. God has given us different gifts for doing different things well'.

So, we pray for Christian Unity, let's pray:

Loving God,

Once more we come together as a family of Your people in this place, knowing that we are also part of Your wider family together with all Your churches and peoples around the world.

We come with an assortment of gifts, demands on our time, and opportunities for service.

We come with diverse experiences of Your love, a multiplicity of insights to share, and a whole range of hopes for the future, but called together by the same Lord.

Though we are many churches and peoples, Lord, make us one in You.

We come to You today Lord Jesus, rejoicing in this diversity within our unity, celebrating the variety of talents, personalities, and experiences You have given us here in this church community, and in every church around our world.

We come with thanksgiving for Your love Lord Jesus, which holds us all together. Lord, make us one in You.

Take all that we are, and fashion us into a united people, dedicated to Your service, and working together for Your kingdom. Though we are many churches and peoples, make us as one body, in unity to work in and witness to Your unfailing love. For Your name's sake Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.

- **Hymn** – 'My hope is built on nothing less' WF 73

Readings – Matt 7: 24-29; PS 18: 1-3; Ps 62: 5-8

Talk 2 – Storms

JC had just finished delivering what we call 'The Sermon on Mount', giving teachings in the Beatitudes, and on all sorts of aspects of life, eg, murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, love for enemies, giving to the needy, fasting, prayer, treasures in heaven, worry, judging others, seeking God, and being fruitful for God. His words were words of loving truths that would enable those people, and all people, to live the abundant life He created them and us to have, even in the midst of our troubled lives and troubled world - the blueprint for how humanity was designed and created to work and thrive.

The illustration of the Wise and Foolish builders comes right at the end of this incredible teaching, and I think JC was very sad as He told the story of the wise and foolish builders. Sad because JC knew that there would be many who heard His words with rapt attention, but then went back to their everyday lives without giving His words a second thought. Listen to the preacher on Sunday, forget all about it Monday to Saturday. I think there are many who do that even today.

This is how the equivalent passage from Luke's gospel appears in Message paraphrase translation:

(Jesus said), 'Why are you so polite with me, always saying 'Yes, sir,' and 'That's right, sir,' but never doing a thing I tell you? These words I speak to you are not mere additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundation words, words to build a life on. If you work the(se) words into your life, you are like a smart builder who dug deep and laid the foundation of his house on bedrock. When the river burst its banks and crashed against the house, nothing could shake it; it was built to last. But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a dumb builder who built a house but skipped the foundation. When the swollen river came crashing in, it collapsed like a house of cards. It was a total loss.'

Quote from my WFT some years ago, someone has said, 'We think of God as a deity to discuss instead of a place to dwell, but God wants us to see Him as the One in whom 'we live and move and have our being'.' JC asks a similar question, 'Why are you so polite with me, always saying 'Yes, sir,' and 'That's right, sir,' but never doing a thing I tell you?' How can we build our lives in God if we don't remember or do what God says?

Everyone can take JC's words as a set of fine principles and good moral teaching, which they certainly are, we can indeed build our lives just on those things, but how do those fine principles and good morals stack up when life breaks and your world falls apart?

Have you ever been at a point in your life where everything is changing all around and/or inside you, and you feel like you're buckling under the weight of a life or situations that are beyond yourself to deal with?

KD suffered many such times in his life, and the more you read the Psalm, the more you realise KD was often very angry with God, not comprehending how what was happening to or around him could possibly be consistent with his God who claimed to love him. Nevertheless, on so many occasions KD also tells us how he made his way through those desperate, stormy times. Ps 62: 5-6, 'Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress; I shall not be shaken.'

In the past year I have had many occasions to empathise with KD. As many of you know, I spent 2 hours every day for months last year in my car driving to and from Broomfield Hospital, just me and God, and UCB radio playing as I drove. On one particularly tough day I wrote this, 'Shouted, screamed, swore to God. Am broken, don't understand how Jeff's continued pain is Your love, God!' Many tears.' That day the storm was definitely in our circumstances, but there was also a mighty raging tempest happening inside me. As I sat in brokenness and floods of tears in my car (before I drove home, I hasten to add), the Lord put a song on the radio with these lyrics

'Faithful One, so unchanging, Ageless One, you are my rock of peace. Lord of all, I depend on you, I call out to you again and again.
You are my rock in times of trouble, you lift me up when I fall down. All through the storm,
Your love is the anchor, my hope is in You alone.'

Would fine principles or good moral teachings have ever been enough to rescue me that day, or any other of many such days? No. My tears of rage and desolation turned to tears of comfort and hope only because of the undeserved, unconditional, unchanging, indescribable love of my God, The rock on which my life, and I hope yours too, is built. Even when I, like KD, didn't understand how what was happening to or around me could fit, be consistent with the love of my Lord God for me, God is the only rock that I know and that the Bible tells me, will never be shaken, will never move from under my feet or yours. Is it easy to stand on that rock? Not always, no. Sometimes, like that day, I have found myself, as I know some of you have too, clinging on to that rock with finger-tip faith, and my finger nails ain't very long.

God's unfailing love is the Rock.

Jesus says, 'He who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, he is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the **foundation** on rock. When the flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.'
Luke 6: 47-48

What is the foundation of your life? I've heard people trust their lives to luck, or even more bonkers, to 'fate'. What is fate? 'If the fates allow' they say. So, are there more of them? Weird isn't it that some people are more willing to trust a nebulous nonsense called 'fate' than the all-powerful person called God who loves them totally and utterly!! Foolish builders, foundationless builders.

As builder John (Dearman) knows, digging foundations takes time and effort, but foundations are vital if the building is to stand strong, to withstand. It's the same with every one of us. Assuming we are building on the rock that is the knowledge and experience of God's love for us, the foundations are our time spent with God, verse by verse in studying the Bible's words of life, prayer by prayer in talking with the Lord, thank-you by thank-you in acknowledging God's blessings, song by song in worship and praise, day by day in choosing to allow Jesus to walk our days with us.

God's Word and time spent with Him is the foundation.

I wonder if sometimes what we actually want is for God to be a genie for us to call on, wanting Him to swoop down and carry us out of the storms of our lives on His magic carpet and instantly make the sky blue and the sun shine again. But that's not how most of life happens is it. Notice in Jesus' story that the builders were not taken out of the storms, neither did the storm take a detour round the wise builder, he too experienced the storm. But God, the rock and foundation of the wise builder, kept the builder **through** the storm. Jesus obviously yearned for all His listeners, then and now, to be like the wise builder. But to me

Jesus' grief for the foolish builder is just as tangible. For those of us privileged to have children, loving our children involves teaching them as best we can in the way of life that is best for them, but then loving them enough to allow them to make their own choices. God is no different with us, because of His love for us. But however errant we can be, however bad some of our life choices, or however destructive our storms of life seem, I can testify that God is the constant, faithful, forgiving, fortress of love for us to run to, to be safe within, to be enfolded and enwrapped by, whether and whenever life is good or bad.

The Wise man built his house, his life, with deep foundations, upon God The Rock, and survived the storm.

The foolish man thought he knew best without God, and was swept away.

Which builder are you?

Ps 62: 5-6, 'Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I shall not be shaken.' Faithful One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HROSwkRwpPI> from minute 1:15 to end only

Amen.

- **Hymn** – 'In Christ alone' WF 43

POI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22WoEYfuZN0>

Blessing

Faithful Lord God,

May we go from this place with our lives firmly fixed

on the Rock of Your immeasurable, unchanging Love for us,

Dependant on You alone, our fortress and salvation,

And in following our Lord Jesus and His word, to love and serve those around us.

In Your Name. Amen.