

To Seek and To Save the Lost

Build Your House on the Rock

Luke 6:46-49

Rev. Freddy Fritz

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Scripture

One of Jesus' best-known sermons is coming to an end. Jesus' Sermon on the Plain is one of the most important sermons in his early ministry.

Jesus opened his Sermon on the Plain with a description of the blessings that belong to those who have entered the kingdom of God, and a warning to those who have not yet entered the kingdom of God by professing faith in him.

Then Jesus described how his disciples are to live as citizens of the kingdom of God. He said that they must love their enemies, not judge others, and examine the fruit of their lives.

Finally, like a good preacher, Jesus concluded his sermon with personal application. Jesus challenged his disciples to examine whether their discipleship was genuine or counterfeit.

Let's read about it in Luke 6:46-49:

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." (Luke 6:46-49)

Introduction

Hurricane Ike roared through Galveston, Texas in September 2008. It was the third-costliest hurricane ever to make

landfall in the United States and the costliest hurricane in Texas history.



In the days following Hurricane Ike, aerial photos were taken of the devastated area. One astonishing photo showed a single house standing in an area where previously there had been about 200 homes. Everything in the area was completely flattened – except for one, single, lone house that belonged to Warren and Pam Adams that was still standing. In fact, that lone house that was still standing was so unusual that many

people questioned whether the photo was actually authentic.

Aaron Reed, a spokesman for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, confirmed that only the Adams’ home survived on that Gulf-side beach. Reed also said, “I thought, if I were to ever build a house on the coast, I’m going to contact the guy who built this.”¹

I remember seeing that same photo in 2008 and thinking that the builder of that lone, standing house had just received national affirmation that he was indeed a good builder.

As Jesus concluded his Sermon on the Plain he used an illustration about good and bad builders to demonstrate the difference between genuine and counterfeit discipleship.

¹ See <http://www.cnn.com/2008/US/09/18/ike.last.house.standing/>.

Lesson

In today's lesson, we learn that a profession of faith apart from obedience is worthless.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Jesus Asks a Personal Question (6:46)
2. Jesus Gives a Powerful Illustration (6:48, 49b)
3. Jesus Delivers a Penetrating Application (6:47, 49a)

I. Jesus Asks a Personal Question (6:46)

First, Jesus asks a personal question.

Jesus asks a personal question in verse 46, **“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”**

Even though Jesus is still in his first year of public ministry, he has already attracted a large number of followers. Luke said that Jesus preached this sermon to the twelve apostles, “a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon” (Luke 6:17). Although Luke does not give us a number, we may safely estimate that there were many hundreds – if not thousands – of people following Jesus, listening to Jesus, and even calling Jesus, **“Lord.”**

The Greek word for **“Lord”** is *kurios*. Sometimes, it is used as “a title of respect used in addressing or speaking of a man—‘sir, mister.’”² We use the term when we address someone we don't know but who is serving us, say, like a waiter at a restaurant. We may say, “Excuse me, sir, may I have a menu please?”

However, **“Lord”** is also sometimes used for one who is *“supreme in authority. . . God, Lord.”*³ Clearly, the people follow-

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 738.

³ James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 44.

ing Jesus are using it in this sense. They are affirming his authority, and even his deity.

But, equally clearly, even though they are affirming his authority, they are not submitting to his Lordship. These people want Jesus as their Savior but they do not want Jesus as their Lord. That is why Jesus asks so pointedly, **“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”**

II. Jesus Gives a Powerful Illustration (6:48, 49b)

Second, Jesus gives a powerful illustration.

The illustration is of two builders: one is a good builder and the other is a bad builder.

It is helpful to keep in mind that Jesus was a professional carpenter (cf. Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3). In those days a carpenter did not work only with wood, but also with stone. In fact, a carpenter was like our modern building contractor.

And so Jesus’ illustration is undoubtedly coming from his own personal experience as a building contractor.

A. *Jesus Describes a Good Builder (6:48)*

First, Jesus describes a good builder.

Jesus describes a good builder in verse 48a **“like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.”**

Here was a man who wanted to build a house. He exerted a lot of effort **building a house**. He was not satisfied with a shallow foundation. He **dug deep**. In fact, he dug so deep that he **laid the foundation on the rock**.

He put in the time, the effort, and the cost to ensure that the house was on a solid foundation, just like the Adams’ home in Texas. Their builder made sure that the columns on which their house was built went all the way down to the rock that

was many, many feet beneath the surface.

The test eventually came, and just like the Adams' home, **“. . . when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built”** (6:48b).

B. Jesus Describes a Bad Builder (6:49b-c)

And second, Jesus describes a bad builder.

Jesus describes a bad builder in verse 49b **“like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation.”**

Here was a man who wanted a house but did not want to expend much energy constructing the house. So, he just **built a house on the ground without a foundation**, or, at least, without a foundation that went all the way down to the rock.

I don't know what the 200 houses around the Adams' home had for foundations, but I guarantee you that their foundations were not as solid as the Adams' foundation.

By all outward appearances the two houses built looked the same from the outside. There were walls, doors, windows, and a roof. It is possible that the second builder's house even looked nicer from the outside than the first builder's house. Outwardly, there was no significant difference between the two houses. So long as the weather was good, both houses fared well.

But the test eventually came, Jesus said, **“When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great”** (6:49c). The house that had no foundation was not built to withstand stormy weather.

III. Jesus Delivers a Penetrating Application (6:47, 49a)

Finally, Jesus delivers a penetrating application.

Jesus says that there two kinds of builders. Each builder is

building a house. Outwardly, each house looks the same. But when the inevitable storm comes, only one house stands. The question is: why does only one house stand? And the answer is: the house that stands is built on a foundation of rock.

The application is obvious. There are two kinds of disciples. Each disciple is building a life. Outwardly, each life looks the same. But when the inevitable storm comes, only one life stands. The question is: why does only one life stand? And the answer is: the life that stands is built on obedience.

Now, before some of you say, "Hey! That's works righteousness!" let me clarify what Jesus is teaching.

It is important to understand that Jesus is not talking about *justification* in this penetrating application. He is in fact talking about *sanctification*. Remember, his personal question in verse 46 is, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not *do* what I tell you?" You see, his disciples were making a profession of faith. They were claiming to be his disciples. They were claiming to be justified. They were claiming Jesus as "Lord." But, Jesus is challenging their claim. He is challenging their profession of faith. He is challenging their justification. He is saying that it is possible to distinguish between a true disciple and a false disciple by the evidence of obedience. He is saying that a justified disciple is always a sanctified disciple. He is saying that a true believer is always a holy believer.

One of the most significant books I read as a young Christian was by Bishop J. C. Ryle titled, *Holiness*. Ryle says:

I have no desire to make an idol of holiness. I do not wish to dethrone Christ, and put holiness in His place. But I must candidly say, I wish sanctification was more thought of in this day than it seems to be, and I therefore take occasion to press the subject on all believers into whose hands these pages may fall. I fear it is sometimes forgotten that God has married together justification and sanctification. They are distinct and different things, beyond question, but one is never found without

the other. All justified people are sanctified, and all sanctified are justified. What God has joined together let no man dare to put asunder. Tell me not of your justification, unless you have also some marks of sanctification. Boast not of Christ's work *for you*, unless you can show us the Spirit's work *in you*.⁴

Elsewhere, Ryle says that "where there is no sanctification of life, there is no real faith in Christ."⁵

And that is what Jesus is saying too.

A. *A True Disciple Obeys Jesus (6:47)*

The first application is: a true disciple obeys Jesus.

Jesus says in verse 47, "**Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like.**" And then Jesus gives the illustration of the good builder.

Jesus uses three words to describe a true disciple. He says that a true disciple **comes** to him, **hears** his words, and **does** them. The key verb regarding Jesus' words is the third one: a true disciple **does them**.

A true disciple obeys Jesus. The apostle John says, "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if *we keep his commandments*" (1 John 2:3). On the night of his betrayal, after the Last Supper, Jesus prayed to his Father, "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and *they have kept your word*" (John 17:6).

A true disciple stands when the storms of life come. He stands when sickness and sin and suffering and disappointment and accidents and mistreatments and illness and so on come his way. He stands because he really is grounded on Christ. He truly is trusting in Christ alone for justification and

⁴ J. C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties and Roots* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1889), 68–69.

⁵ J. C. Ryle, 26.

for sanctification.

Think of Job in the Old Testament. He lost an immense fortune. He lost 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and many servants to attacks and catastrophes. He even lost all of his seven sons and three daughters. How did Job respond to this horrific news? Job 1:20–21 says, “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’” Job did not turn from the Lord. Instead, he worshiped him, trusting God even in the midst of his pain.

Pastor Scott Willis and his wife Janet had no inkling of what awaited them when they and the youngest six of their nine children piled into their minivan, buckled up, and left their home on Chicago’s south side for Wisconsin. It would turn out to be a day of excruciating pain and horror. While driving north on Interstate 94 in Milwaukee, the van ran over a large piece of metal that punctured the gas tank, turning the van into a raging furnace. By the time the van stopped and the parents fell out, their children were hopelessly trapped, as their mother screamed, “No No! No!”

One could suppose that for the Willises God had never been so far away. Yet, at a news conference the burned, bandaged couple, still in physical pain, gave witness to God’s grace.

Janet said that when she looked back toward the van and began screaming, Scott touched her shoulder. “He said, ‘Janet, this is what we’ve been prepared for.’ And he was right. He said, ‘Janet, it was quick and they’re with the Lord,’ and he was right.”

In their shared hospital room they comforted themselves by watching videos of their children, reading passages from God’s Word, and talking openly about what had happened.

The Willises’ living testimony amidst the tears and heart-

ache is instructing.

“I know God has purposes and God has reasons,” says Scott. “God has demonstrated his love to us and our family. There’s no question in our mind that God is good, and we praise him in all things.”

“It’s his right,” agrees Janet. “We belong to Him. My children belong to him. He’s the giver and taker of life and he sustains us.”⁶

A true disciple obeys Jesus – even in the storms of life.

B. A False Disciple Does Not Obey Jesus (6:49a)

And the second application is: a false disciple does not obey Jesus.

Jesus says in verse 49a, “**But the one who hears and does not do them**” is like the bad builder.

Notice that the false disciple **hears** Jesus’ words but **does not do them**.

The false disciple makes a profession of faith. He says he belongs to Jesus. He claims to be a Christian. But he does not obey Jesus.

A false disciple does not obey Jesus. The apostle John says, “Whoever says ‘I know him [that is, Jesus]’ but *does not keep his commandments* is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). James 2:14–17 says, “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also *faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*”

⁶ Michael A. Lev, “Couple Held on to God in Tragedy,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 17, 1994, pp. 1, 18 in R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 247.

The false disciple looks like a true disciple. However, his life is not grounded on Christ. And so when trials and difficulties come, he falls away. And worst of all, when he stands before God on the Day of Judgment, Jesus will say to him, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matthew 7:23).

Conclusion

So, if we profess faith in Jesus, we must ask ourselves: are we obeying Jesus? Or, to put it biblically, and use Jesus' own words in verse 46, **"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"**

The home of Warren and Pam Adams that stood alone after Hurricane Ike was actually a rebuilt home. Warren and Pam Adams lost a house three years earlier to Hurricane Rita in 2005.⁷ They realized after Hurricane Rita that they still wanted to live on the beach, but in order to do so they needed to lay the foundation of their home on the rock. They did so and their new home withstood Hurricane Ike in 2008.

You have time today to rip out of your life a mere profession of faith. You have time today to admit to Jesus that you have lived a shallow, disobedient profession. You merely wanted to look like the other Christians around you. But now you realize that when the storms of life come and, especially, when the Day of Judgment comes, your life will not stand.

So, right now, repent of your sin. Turn from your disobedience. Turn from your shallow, mere profession of faith. Put your trust fully and wholeheartedly in Jesus. Ask Jesus to enable you to live a life of wholehearted, day-by-day obedience to every Word that proceeds from the Scriptures.

And when you do so, you will discover that your life will stand when the storms of life come your way. Amen.

⁷ See <http://www.cnn.com/2008/US/09/18/ike.last.house.standing/>.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp
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Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org

PRAYER:

Oh Jesus, it is so easy to call you “Lord, Lord,” and not do what you tell us.

If there is anyone here today who is making a mere profession of faith, will you show that person his or her peril. Open that person’s eyes to his or her danger.

Will you grant that person repentance and faith. And then, having done so, will you grant that person – and all of us – obedience to every Word that proceeds from your Scriptures.

And for this I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!