

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Pastor Mark Gartner

Sermon for Confirmation Sunday – April 30th and May 2nd, 2009

Luke 6:46-49

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like 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 a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

Dear Children of God who are filled with his love,

Does anyone know the answer to this question? What is the tallest man-made skyscraper in the world? It is not the Sears tower in Chicago which is a meager 1450 feet. It is not the Taipei building in China at a modest 1670 ft. It is the Burj Dubai Towers from the United Arab Emirates which currently is at 2684 ft. and when it is completely done is said that it will be close to 2953 ft tall. To put that in perspective, that is over ½ mile high and more than double the size of the Sears Tower. And in case you are wondering the Saudi's are planning to build a structure that will be completed in about a decade that will be almost a mile high coming in at about whopping 5000 ft. I was wondering what kind of foundation you would have to have for a building that is over a ½ mile high. For your information, the Dubai Towers foundation goes down over 165 ft and it contains 110,000 tons of concrete. I don't know if that is enough or not, but it is going to take quite a bit to knock this building off its foundation.

As we sit here today we are looking at 19 young men and women who will in very short time confess their faith publically and will be confirmed. Their faith and their lives are a lot like the skyscrapers that we talked about before. In order for them to be strong they need to build their faith and life on a very solid foundation. Outwardly these young men and women are “little buildings” who in physical stature range in size from around 5 ft. tall to just over 6 ft. tall. What kind of foundation do you need for such a small looking person? It wouldn't seem like you would need a very solid foundation at all for structures that are only 5- 6 ft. tall. But as our text points out for us on this Confirmation Sunday, these 19 young men and women need a more solid foundation than the ½ mile tall tower from Dubai. They are going to have more things trying to destroy them and their faith than any kind of earthly troubles a skyscraper might face. And that is why we are going to let the Gospel writer Luke remind us through a parable that we need to:

Theme: Build on Christ!

- 1. He is our foundation**
- 2. He is our strength**

The words for our text today are from a parable that Jesus was speaking to people who had questions about what it meant to be a Christian. That is why Jesus begins this section with a question, **“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”** That is a question that Jesus was going to answer with his words from the parable that is our text for today. Jesus is reminding the people of his day and he is reminding us today that he is not looking for people who just listen to God's Word. He wants people who actually listen and obey God's Word. He doesn't just want us to know the commandments. He actually wants us to live his commandments. He doesn't just want us to know that sins like adultery is wrong. He wants us to put this into practice as we realize that adultery includes even the sin of lusting in our hearts and minds and that it is meant for those who are married and not married.

That being said Jesus says, **“I will show you what he is like 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 a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it**

was well built.” Jesus uses the picture of a person who is building his house. This person has a number of different choices as he builds his house. He has to find the right place to build it and most important of all, he needs to decide what is going to be the foundation for his house. The first person Jesus talks about is a man who built his house on a solid rock foundation. This word for rock is not just a little bit of rock or a small rock. This is a massive rock formation. This is something that cannot move. Before we talked about the tallest buildings in the whole wide world. We said that the foundation for this large structure was started with the foundation which was the equivalent of digging a whole 165 feet down to the solid ground and then forming a large concrete foundation.

As these young men and women sit here before us, we might ask them what is their foundation? I hope that they don't say that their foundation is all of their hard work which they have put in over the last two grueling years with Pastor Gartner and Pastor Schultz. I pray that they don't say that their foundation is the Confirmation Certificate that they will receive after today with their names and today's date printed on it. I pray that they don't say that their foundation is anything earthly. It is my prayer and it's Pastor Schultz's prayer that each of them would say that their foundation is nothing else than the message of Jesus Christ that is found in God's Word the Bible. I pray that they will say that there is only one foundation that will remain firm as they move forward in their spiritual lives. I pray that they will never ever move from the foundation of Jesus Christ which will never fall or crumble. For the last two years they have faithfully come to hear and learn this message in Catechism Class where they learned more and more about what it means to be a child of God.

But that actually leads us to another question. Why is it important to have a solid foundation based on Jesus Christ, as it is given to us in God's holy Word? Our text uses the picture of a flood that came and hit the house. What exactly is the "flood" that hits our spiritual houses? There are going to be lots of different things that pound and beat upon our spiritual houses. You have the Devil who is working very hard to lead us to think today is the pinnacle or peak of our Christian faith and life. Too often this day that we call Confirmation Sunday is looked at as the final goal rather than one more piece to our spiritual building. The Devil is attacking us as Jesus said by leading us to hear God's Word but not put it into practice. God doesn't really care if we show up at his gate on Judgment Day, and we haul out our Confirmation Certificate as if he would be impressed and let us into heaven. God is not going to be overly impressed as we stand before him on Judgment Day and we haul out our little spiritual resume' and it says that we were baptized at St. Luke's, we went to Sunday School or TSL at St. Luke's or that we were confirmed, married or any other thing that might look pretty impressive. Jesus on Judgment Day is going to look at our foundation and see if we have built our whole life and faith on Jesus and his forgiving Gospel life. He is going to look into our hearts and see if our faith was alive and active as we regularly came to hear God's Word, partake of the Lord's Supper and served our Lord and Savior out of love and thanks.

That is why we need to look at the second person who built his house, **“But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”** Does anyone know anything about a structure that was built in the Italian town of Pisa? What is it famous for? As we all know it is famous for being a "leaning" tower. It is said that the structure started to lean even before the structure was fully completed. The reason that it leans at almost a 4 degree incline is because it has only a 10 ft foundation built on some very loose soil. Who was the genius that thought that this foundation would be good? One of the reasons that it hasn't fallen over is that they started to build the upper layers taller on one side to make it straight again. It actually is slightly curved in shape as they tried to bring the top layers even, and they also have worked on strengthening the foundation in the past years.

What becomes very evident is that a weak foundation is going to have some very serious consequences. Physically speaking a house with a weak foundation will not be able to withstand the earthly elements such as a flood that comes its way. Jesus describes it as a complete destruction. Last year Lake Delton up by the Wisconsin Dells was filled so full of rain that it began to overflow a portion of the man-made bank and it eventually washed out one whole chunk of the bank holding the water in the lake. I can still remember the pictures and videos of those very large houses being sweep away by the rushing torrents of water. They were utterly destroyed in a matter of minutes by the power of the water. There was nothing that the

homeowners could do to stop it.

As we sit here today, we need to remind ourselves why this is such a special day. It is not special because it means that these 19 young men and women are now somehow so strong in their faith that the Devil will never be able to destroy them. If we think that, then we have really missed the point. Why is today special? It is special, only because today we actually get to hear these young men and women declare the truths of salvation as they have learned them through God's Word and as it is presented in Luther's Catechism. It is special, because these young men and women have been instructed on what the Lord's Supper is and now believe and trust that in this special meal they are receiving Jesus' true body and blood together with the simple bread and wine for the forgiveness of their sins. Confirmation is special, because it is a day for all of us to remember that the foundation of Jesus that they are confessing today is the same foundation that we also are building on as we hear and learn God's Word and as we obey the words that Jesus has given to us.

As we sit here today, we can see very clearly what God's foundation is and what some of the temptations are that are trying to destroy the faith of these young people. But today is also a wonderful opportunity for us to look at some very basic things in the lives of these young people which will help them as they continue to grow in their faith in Christ Jesus. The first is the parents of these young people. Certainly it is the faith of these young people that is important. They cannot and will not get into heaven because of the faith of you as their parents. But as parents we need to make sure that our faith is firmly rooted on the foundation of Christ so that we can be an example with our words and our actions as we assist our children in the building of their spiritual houses. For instances, these young men and women cannot at this time drive themselves to Church. So the only way that they can continue to build on the foundation of Christ is for you as their parents to faithfully and joyfully bring them to God's house to hear God's Word and to eat of the Lord's Supper. Parents also are the example that their children will most likely follow. What they see you do and speak will in most cases be what they speak and do. If they see in your lives that God and his Word is not important, then there are good chances that they will live lives that are not always building on the foundation of Jesus and his Word. May God give you parents the strength and foundation to lead your children by your words and by your actions as you hear God's Word and put it into practice.

And finally we need to see that God is talking to everyone of us gathered in his house here today. It is a battle out in this sinful world. These young men and women are being attacked and will be attacked by many things trying to destroy their spiritual foundation. That is one of the blessings of being a part of a Christian Church such as St. Luke's. We know that these young men and women are not fighting alone, but they have all of us here this morning plus the many other souls of believers at St. Luke's praying for them and encouraging them in their faith. I pray that we never forget that God has given us the joy and privilege of watching over the souls of these 19 young men and women as we daily pray for them and as we take an interest in their spiritual welfare so that they may continue to build on the foundation of Christ.

Today on this special Day, God has given us a beautiful portion of his Word to build up your faith as he reminds each of us to build on Christ who is our foundation and who is our strength. Without him as our foundation and strength, we are sure to fail and will be completely destroyed by the many temptations of the Devil. As we close today, I want to talk just for a minute about one of the neatest things of Confirmation. The very last question of our Public review with the kids ends with the question if you died tonight do you know where you would be and why. Each year as one of the students answers this question. As this last question is answered so very well by the students who says that they know they will be in heaven and why because Jesus died and rose again on the third day to take away all my sins and give me eternal life. Then we truly realize what a blessing it is to know God's Word and the way to heaven through Jesus Christ. Amen.