

## ***“Follow the Building Code”***

Matthew 7:21-29

Last Friday, another accident hit the construction industry in New York City. In less than 3 months, another crane fatally collapsed killing 2 construction workers. Investigations are going on and officials are looking closely as to what cause the accident and if there were any violations of the codes prescribed in constructing high rise building. There are rules in constructing a house or a building. Architects and engineers have to follow the rules not only for fear of being fined heavily on each violation but most of all rules are to be followed for the safety of those who will eventually live in the building.

During Jesus time, building houses was not as complex as what we have today. They do not have high rise building like the one where the crane collapsed last Friday. But Jesus used the common knowledge about simple construction rules and principles. In our text today, he spoke about building a house on rock. He points to the importance of a good and solid foundation.

Matthew 7:21-29 is the closing statement of the whole section referred to as Jesus Sermon on the Mount that begins in chapter 5. Here Matthew projected Jesus as the new Moses who brought God’s word to the people from a mountain. This incident paralleled that event when Moses went down from Mt. Sinai and told the people about the commandments that God had given. In this event, Jesus was seen as the new lawgiver but this time the laws he gave had a different twist. Just a few of these radical commandments includes:

*"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire.” (Matthew 5:21-22)*

*"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a*

*tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also."* (Matthew 5:38)

*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."* (Matthew 5:43-44)

So when Jesus said in v. 24 *"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock."* He meant the words he had spoken in this particular sermon and this we can read starting in chapter 5 until chapter 7. Reading these chapters will give us a glimpse on Jesus theology and understanding of God.

There are two points that Jesus wanted to convey in this text. *First, about the importance of doing the will of God*, he said, *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.'*

This is a radical departure of conventional wisdom. The people whom we might think as closer to God because they always acknowledge Jesus and called him Lord and even exhibit deeds power are not really God's people. What counts is not the brand name – whether we are called the 'Praise the Lord' or the 'Justice People' or whether we have the capacity to do powerful acts either by transforming dying churches into a mega church or making a congregation a spotlight of the nation's attention – what matters most to Jesus is whether we do God's will as he described and prescribed in this Sermon on the Mount.

The acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord is tested not on the basis of words but in radical obedience to Jesus command. It is not measured in the power to generate results for our own satisfaction but power used to pursue God's Kingdom. We may have the

power, the influence, the money, and the skills but if it does not serve God's purpose – even if we call ourselves super Christians, at the end Jesus consider it nothing.

Second, **Jesus then hinted that hearing the word and acting on the word matters most.** This is where he gives as the image of a person who builds a house on the rock and one who builds a house on the sand. He also referred to them as the wise and the foolish builders.

Most of us see a picture of the Tower is Pisa in Italy. The tower reaches some 180 feet into the sky, and is covered with ornate marble and stonework. The tower's claim to fame is its ever-increasing lean to the south. In fact, since construction first begun in 1173, the tower's lean has increased year by year to the point that the top of the tower was nearly 17 feet further south than the bottom. In the late 1990s, authorities agreed an ambitious effort to correct its trademark tilt. Using a device called a soil extractor, they removed tons of dirt from underneath the tower, and managed to reduce its famous lean by about sixteen inches. These efforts, they calculate, will add about three more centuries to the tower's lifespan. The problem with the leaning tower isn't the tower itself – it's what lies underneath. (Sermon Nuggets)

Here we have a classic example of building a tower not on a solid rock or stone, but building a structure on a foundation that is not suited for the weight of the building itself. Foundations are very crucial and critical in building any structure. You don't have to be an engineer to know this. And this is also true in other areas of life. Our spiritual foundational is crucial in the way we respond and react to the world.

Parents know how important foundations are – they seek the best schools and the best teachers for their children because they know that the basic foundation like writing, speaking and creative ability to think, social and other skills should be in placed early in life otherwise children will not develop as they should be – individuals with wholesome personality and with a healthy and positive outlook and attitude in life. Deficiencies in the foundation whether in building or in life cannot be hidden. Who and what we are today

is the result of how we were “crafted or constructed” in the past.

The importance of critical foundations in child’s life leads us to put value on the teaching vocations. Those who are in the position of authority in teaching should take seriously their responsibility. As it is said, if a doctor makes a mistake, the patient dies. If an engineer makes a mistake in calculation the building cannot be completed. If an accountant makes a mistake on the figures then the books will not be balanced. But think about the implication on what teachers and pastors do when they teach falsehood and insist on their students and congregations to take their instruction as absolute truth? They will carry this falsehood in their lifetime and the impact of the false teaching multiply in great proportion. Most of the time, it will take great efforts to unlearn what had already been accepted as truth but turns out to be false. I remember a tailor who said, “You know it is easy to cut and make new pants rather than to repair one. The process is more tedious and most of the times both the tailor and the customer is not satisfied.

If we read again Jesus Sermon on the Mount and compare to what we really believe about God as Jesus taught, there would be lot of current theology that needs to be unlearned or some understanding of God that we need to relearn.

Actually, there are many things in our culture that we assumed as part of the Christian faith. Many believed that to be American one has to be Christian and not just any Christian one with particular leaning. Faith in God as revealed in Christ has nothing to do with American citizenship. We are first Christian who happens to be Americans or Filipinos. Our faith is not tied up to who are but to whom we belong.

I am fascinated in the way the press portrayed U.S. politics. I observed that there is a given assumption that evangelical Christians should be Republican by choice. It looks like one cannot take Jesus seriously and vote Democrat. I believe Jesus has something to say both to the Democrats and the Republicans and even those who are taking for granted their citizenship and those who live as if winning the election is the only thing that matters.

I am also worried of people who call themselves Christians whose faith revolves only in particular and sometimes popular issues of the day; whether support of the war on terror, gay marriage, AIDS, abortion, race, gender and other hot topics. Many of us take our cue from TV and the opinions of leaders and have not really think and reflect through with these concerns and weigh for ourselves God's response based on what we know of Jesus in the Sermon of the Mount and the Scripture itself.

Jesus challenge us not just to call him Lord and but most of all to follow him on where he stands. This is where the foundation of our faith should be – not on what the survey will say or not according to where the popular opinion swings – but according to Jesus as we know him in the Scripture and as what the church had testified about him.

The Sacrament of Communion points us to this truth that we who believe in him are sustained by his body and blood, his very nature. He becomes part of us just as the bread and wine is in us. It signifies our intention that we build our lives and our faith in him who is like a rock, a solid foundation. The choice is laid before us today, to be wise or to be foolish, to build on the solid rock or in the shifting sands. This what Jesus said: *"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock."*

Let us build our life, our faith on Jesus the solid tock.

June 1, 2008  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

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June 1, 2008 – 1:30 P.M.  
Preacher: Rev. Reuben D. Cedino

Sermon: "*Follow the Building Code*"

SCRIPTURE READING:

*Psalter:* Psalm 46

*Gospel:* Matthew 7: 21-29

Anthem: "A Prayer of Grateful Praise"

*Fil-Am UCC Choir*

Liturgist: Ms. Laura Lambert

Pianist: Mr. Noel Rivera III

Organist and Choral Director: Ms. Rachel A. Dadap

Ms. Eva Tubo, *Elder-in-Charge*

Mr. & Mrs. Boy & Eba Tubo, *Ushers*

Ms. Ellen V. Cedino, *Floral Offering*