

The Gospel Of Luke

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’²⁰

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ (Luke 4:16-21. NRSV)

Message 13

The Firm Foundation

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Luke 6:46-49

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Open your Bibles this morning to Luke 6:46-49. The passage we are looking at is the conclusion to Luke’s version of the Sermon on the Mount. The meaning of this passage is not all that hard to understand and so we won’t spend too much explaining it, we will spend most of our time ASSIMILATING IT. Some things in the Bible are easy to understand and hard to deal with, amen? Amen. So it is here. Verse 46 says:

‘Why do you call me “Lord, Lord”, and do not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. ⁴⁸That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.’ (Luke 6:46-49. NRSV)

What Is The Meaning Of This Passage?

Let's deal firstly and briefly with the meaning of this passage. As I said a minute ago this passage is easy to understand and hard to deal with and so it is. Jesus has just finished preaching the sermon on the mount, he has said some pretty incredible things like:

'Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

37 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven;

43 'No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit;

it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. (Luke 6:20-45. NRSV)

These are some of the best known, most beloved verses in all the Bible. We love these verses, we have them highlighted and underlined and maybe even memorised. Hallelujah! But, Jesus says, none of that matters unless you actually live them out.

'Why do you call me "Lord, Lord", and do not do what I tell you? (Luke 6:46. NRSV)

"Saving faith is about more than hearing my Words", Jesus says, "it's about more than calling yourself my disciple. Professions of faith are wonderful, an appetite for my teaching is wonderful but unless you dig down deep into the soil of your life, rooting out every evil desire and false habit and addiction and build your entire house upon the ROCK of my Word, than it is all for naught. In the day of trial your faith will be revealed as a sham and a smokescreen and great will be the ruin of your life." That's what he said and that's what he meant. Easy to understand, difficult to deal with. So let's spend the rest of our time wrestling with the implications of this teaching.

What Are The Implications Of This Passage?

The first implication is one we try very hard to ignore, but the Word of God leave us little room to doubt that:

1. Not everyone who “comes to Jesus” will be saved.

Look very carefully at verses 46 and 47:

46 ‘Why do you call me “Lord, Lord”, and do not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. (NRSV)

The whole point of the story that follows is to show that there are two types of “coming to Jesus”. There is a coming to Jesus that has all the trappings we generally look for; there is the adamant profession of faith. This person doesn’t just call Jesus his Lord, he cries out passionately: “Lord, Lord!” I’ve told you before that in the Hebrew culture repetition was a means of expressing extreme states or amplifications. In our culture we say that someone is VERY TALL, in the Hebrew world they would say that someone is TALL, TALL. This is why the Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy. The three fold amplification is reserved for God alone. God alone is VERY, VERY HOLY. Ok, so Jesus is saying that there is a person who comes to Jesus and makes a very adamant, emotional claim that Jesus is their Lord. They are sincere in that, they BELIEVE IT and they are dead wrong. Then, he goes on to say, there is a coming to Jesus that is real, let me show you the difference. So it cannot be denied that this passage teaches that not everyone who “comes to Jesus” will be saved. Let me say that another way, not everyone who raises their hand at camp will be saved. Let me say that another way, not everyone who was baptised as a teenager will go to heaven. Let me say that another way, not everyone who raises their hands when they worship, passionately crying out and giving sincere expression to their love of Jesus will be saved. Do you believe that? It’s hard not to, if you know your Bible because Jesus said stuff like this all the time. In Matthew’s Gospel Jesus said something very similar. He said:

‘Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord”, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²²On 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?” ²³Then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.” (Matthew 7:21-23. NRSV)

So let me say that another way, not everyone who calls Jesus Lord and who moves in the power of the Holy Spirit will enter the kingdom of heaven. Do you believe that? Do you believe that there are people who speak words of prophesy, they have dreams, visions and WORDS FROM GOD who will die and go to hell? Let me ask that another way, do you believe that there are people who claim Jesus as their Lord, who exercise power over demons, who speak in the full authority of Jesus' name, who when they preach, HELL ITSELF FALLS BACK, and yet when they die, Jesus will say to them: "Away from me, you evil doers"? Do you believe that? Or do you deny Scripture?

You see most of us when we look at those Scriptures would agree that that is EXACTLY what those passages mean, but then in the very next breath we would say that we don't believe a person can lose their salvation, we don't believe that people who make a sincere profession of faith as a child can be removed from the Body of Christ later in life through persistent sin and unbelief, we would say in the very next breath that once saved, always saved, we would say that we don't believe that a true believer could ever really fall away. There is a huge gap between our practical theology, what we really seem to believe and the Words of Scripture. I told you a few weeks ago that theology is basically a simple equation; it is the Words of Scripture PLUS human interpretation. If we were to draw it out as an equation it would look like this:

Words of Scripture + Human interpretation = Theology

If we were Bible geeks with limited social skills we would draw it this way:

$$L + F = Q$$

Of course regular people don't want to hang around with people who do such things so we will keep that on the down low. The point is that when there is a large divergence between the obvious meaning of the words of Scripture and the theology that emerges at the other side there is a problem with your human interpretation. You have a bias that is getting in the way of the truth. The bias in this case is usually love. Most of us believe all of what the Bible says on this matter until we love someone that makes a profession of faith at camp or in youth group and then turns away from the Lord in adulthood and lives a life of rebellion and disbelief. Then because we

don't want this to be true, it ceases to be true and we refuse to hear it. But there is a problem with that and the problem is that it condemns future generations of converts to ultimate failure.

When we start to tell people that all they have to do is raise their hands, or stand in the tank and they will for sure go to heaven we condemn them to a faith that WILL NOT STAND. We refuse to talk about the danger of falling away, we refuse to talk about the reality of false and fading faith because we can't believe that for the sake of our own sons and daughters who have fallen away but by cutting that reality out of our belief system, we have condemned an entire generation of young people to a faith that cannot possibly endure. I see them when I go to camp to visit my wife, I see them when I speak at youth retreats. They raise their hands and they weep while they worship. They love Jesus! They are so thankful for his grace and mercy and then you listen to them talk the next day and they swear, they gossip, they slander and they lie. You go to their Facebook site and there are pictures of them drunk out of their minds and stories of their sexual exploits and you know they will be back next week with hands raised to Jesus, so thankful for their salvation that we assured them was theirs to keep because they raised their hands at camp when they were 9. But Jesus says:

'Why do you call me "Lord, Lord", and do not do what I tell you? (Luke 6:46. NRSV)

It's all a lie and it has to stop. We have to stop telling people that profession of faith is saving faith. Not everyone who calls me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. Profession of faith is NOT SAVING FAITH. Not yet anyway. You have to persevere. You have to go deeper.

Acknowledging the reality of failed and fading faith has HUGE implications for us as a church. It means that:

2. We have to be committed to more than speaking the Gospel and "sowing the seed"; we have to go deep.

Jesus paints a picture of the person who comes to him and builds a faith that will endure. He says:

That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock (Luke 6:48. NRSV)

“That one dug deep! That one took the time to really dig into my Word. That one took the time to sort through all the loose dirt, all the fleshy habits, all the worldly thinking and to move it all aside so that the foundations of his life could be built on solid rock. That one will last.” This is why we refuse to believe in this place that preaching the same introductory message week after week is somehow a wise blueprint for building a church. All the books will tell you that though, they will say that Sunday church is really just your front door. Use it to attract seekers, don’t go too deep. Just tell them Jesus loves them and let them determine how deep into things they want to go. And so Christians sit week after week under the same thin messages, the same introductory teaching, Christianity 101 and their faith withers, atrophies and dies for lack of food. Meanwhile new believers are never given the foundation that they need to survive the storms that will surely come. No matter, here comes another new person now. In churches that do this it is always springtime, never harvest. There is always excitement about this new person or that, this green shoot or that, but there is never any BUILDING. Never any permanence, never any FOUNDATION. We have to stop doing this! The Scriptures do not think of themselves as wading pools to be entered slowly and shallowly. Rather the Bible says:

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account. (Hebrews 4:12-13. NRSV)

The Word of God is not a pool you wade into as deep as you please it is a sword that pierces you to the very core, dividing soul from spirit, joint from marrow. It tests and weighs EVERY THOUGHT and intention of the human heart to prepare you to stand before the one to whom you will give an account. That’s pretty deep.

Listen church, I want to do more than float balloons in here, I want to harvest. I want to dance at funerals for men and women who have run the race and PERSEVERED to the very end. Now, I love our balloons, I love baby believers, but I get really jazzed about dead saints. I want to do a funeral for every one of those balloons one day and I want to hear stories about their faith, their maturity, their vitality and their constancy. So we have to do more than get people “saved” in here, we have to help them dig deep. We have to show them how to get from the ditch they found Jesus in to the elevated highway of our God. That’s why we do Mile 1 groups in here. Mile 1 is a resource we created in house about 18 months ago. We had all these people come to

know Christ and way too many of them fell away within 6 months. So we realised that we needed to help them dig. That's what Mile 1 does. It shows you the 16 changes you need to make to get established on the narrow way, to sink a foundation upon which you can build a transformed life. That's also why we do so much addictions counselling in here. That's why we do reCOVER, because if there is rot underneath where you are trying to build your new life you need to fix that or you will collapse when the first storm hits. Some of you like things real practical so let me give that to you. When we are talking about digging deep and building a foundation we are talking about two things:

- i. Clearing away the rubble.
- ii. Finding the Rock

Clearing away the rubble means dealing with old habits, old ways of thinking and old patterns of behaving. We expose them and then we drive them away. Then we find the Rock. We learn the Word and the Ways of Jesus and we move our house there. Did you use to use sex to ensnare men and keep them close? That's an old habit, an old way of thinking. Let's expose that, deal with it and get rid of it. We're not going to do it that way. Now let's learn God's design for human intimacy and anything in your life that looks like the old way has to go and everything gets moved over onto the sure foundation of His Word and His Design. That's digging deep and it has to be done.

Let me say as well that I believe that only the church can do this job. Any parachurch ministry worth its salt has figured this out. In the 60's, 70's and 80's parachurch ministries like Youth For Christ, Campus Crusade, camp ministries etc. all noticed that the church was not doing a good job at evangelism so they decided to take over. Rather than fix the church, which would have ruffled feathers, they LEFT the church and tried to do the Great Commission outside of the church. They got lots of hands in the air, made lots of baby Christians but they lacked the mechanism for foundation building. Foundation building requires COMMUNITY. It takes one person getting in the face of the other person and saying: "Hey! I notice you still watch pornography, tell me about that." Or "Hey! I notice you still gossip like an old fish monger, tell me about that. Isn't that an old way of thinking? Have you seen in the Bible where it says...." That only happens in the church and that's why good parachurch ministries today only work through local churches. Compassion, the ministry Jody works with in Honduras will ONLY

work through local churches because otherwise you are just abandoning baby Christians on the garbage heap. Babies need a family. New believers only go deep with the help of a tribe.

3. **There will always be trial.**

A careful reading of this story reflects a belief in the certainty of trials and also the reason for these trials. Look:

⁴⁷I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. ⁴⁸That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; **when a flood arose**, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. **When the river burst against it**, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.’ (NRSV)

The only thing that the two men in this story have in common is the promise of a flood! Whether you build wisely or foolishly, the flood will come. Whether your faith has a firm and lasting foundation or a flimsy and insubstantial foundation, the FLOOD WILL COME. Hear that church! Far too often the message in the North American Evangelical church seems to be that IF YOU HAVE the right kind of faith, floods will NEVER COME. Only blessings will be showered on the ones with the right kind of faith. But that’s not true. The flood that washed away the house of the foolish man also battered the house of the man of faith, though it did not prevail. Suffering comes to EVERYONE, trials are inevitable and they are not without purpose. Listen to what the Bible says:

⁶In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while **you have had to suffer various trials**, ⁷so that **the genuineness of your faith**—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, **is tested** by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹for **you are receiving** the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:6-9. NRSV)

According to the Bible, trials reveal whether or not our faith is genuine and through our passing through these trials we are RECEIVING the salvation of our souls. Notice that it does not say: “When you put your hand up you RECEIVED salvation” it says “as your faith is tested and the genuineness of it is revealed, you are RECEIVING salvation”. That’s a whole different story isn’t it? But those are the Words of Scripture.

Trials seem to have two purposes in the Bible that are very much related. First of all, they reveal the genuineness or falseness of our faith. That's what the storm or the flood in the Jesus' story serves to do. It reveals whose house was built on the true foundation, the Rock of Salvation, Jesus Christ. The second function of trials is to GROW our faith. Both James and the author of Hebrews stress this point:

⁷**Endure trials for the sake of discipline.** God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline?... ¹¹Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but **later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.** (Hebrews 12:7-11. NRSV)

James says it this way:

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that **the testing of your faith develops perseverance.** ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2. NIV)

One of the greatest weaknesses in North American Christianity of all flavours is our incapacity in the face of suffering. We have had it so well for so long in this country that we are no longer able to process suffering as anything other than a threat to our belief in the goodness of God.

Suffering has fallen completely out of our theology and as a result when it happens, as surely it will we react with confusion and depression. "How can this be happening to me? I'm a good person, I go to church, I donate blood! Is God really in control?" Why all of the sudden, does the experience of suffering throw the reality of God's sovereignty into question? Because it doesn't fit our equation. We draw the equation this way:

God is good + God is in control + God loves me = I will never suffer.

What's worse, we hear this equation preached from our pulpits. You may be surprised to learn that this story Jesus told was an adaptation of a story in the Old Testament. If you have attended this church for any length of time that will likely NOT surprise you. Let me show you what scholars call the "ancestor" of this New Testament parable, it's in Ezekiel 13:

¹⁰Because, in truth, because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace', when there is no peace; and because, when **the people build a wall,** these prophets smear whitewash on it. ¹¹Say to those who smear whitewash on it that it shall fall. **There will be a deluge of rain, great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind will break out.** ¹²When the wall falls, will it not be said to you, 'Where is the whitewash you smeared on it?' ¹³Therefore thus says the Lord God: In my wrath I will make a stormy wind break out, and in my anger there shall be a deluge of rain, and hailstones in wrath to destroy it. ¹⁴I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it to the ground, **so**

that its foundation will be laid bare; when it falls, you shall perish within it; and you shall know that I am the Lord.
¹⁵Thus I will spend my wrath upon the wall, and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash; and I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who smeared it—¹⁶the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for it, when there was no peace, says the Lord God. (Ezekiel 13:10-16. NRSV)

The prophet Ezekiel is speaking out against false prophets who said that God would never allow his people to suffer because he loved them and he was in control. Ezekiel and other members of the Jewish nobility were in comfortable exile at this time in the land of Babylon. There had been a minor uprising in Israel and the Babylonian King had taken members of the nobility as royal hostages against the future good behaviour of the Jews. The prophets back home in Jerusalem were saying to the people: “Relax! The punishment of God is gentle! So a few nobles are in exile, they are eating grapes in the King’s palace! The temple still stands, the Lord is with us! He will soon punish these barbarians and restore our glory as his people.” But Ezekiel knew different. He knew that the sin of Israel went way deeper than gentle exile would address. He said that the false prophets were like those who paint over a wall that has no true foundation. They cover over the cracks with paint. They should have known from the cracks that there was NO TRUE FOUNDATION and that the coming storm would wash it all away but instead they told people that everything would be fine and that God loved his people too much to allow them to really suffer.

They were wrong. A few months later the Babylonians turned and sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple, scattered the population and effectively ended the national life of Israel. The rain came and the lies of the prophets were revealed. The same lies are back in vogue today. “The church is fine, don’t be so negative. Attendance at some churches is up dramatically! Things are ok. Sure our kids are statistically no different than the world’s kids on issues of sexual promiscuity, drunkenness and drug use but kids are kids. Its all grace anyway. Sure the Christian divorce rate is no different than the pagan divorce rate, and sure the reputation of the church is in ruin all over the world but none of us are perfect right? Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” Be careful what you ask for.

What is interesting about the parable in Luke 6 is that throughout the history of the church it has been interpreted in a corporate sense. Meaning it was understood as a story about the church that will endure and the church that will fail under trial. Let me show you how one church father named Bede preached on this passage. He said:

*Just as in building a house nothing is to be preferred to the rock on which the foundation is laid, **so holy church** has its rock, namely Christ, concealed in the depth of it's heart... When a flood came, the stream was dashed against that house and could not shake it, for it was founded upon the rock. The explanation is obvious: **the church** is often struck by distressful situations but is not overthrown. – Bede. Homilies On The Gospels. 2.25*

Throughout history we have believed that God uses distressing situations, trials and TRIBULATIONS to separate true churches from false. We have believed that true churches are purified by the testing of faith and true believers readied for his presence. We have EXPECTED trials, believed they were inevitable until now. Ours is the first generation in the history of the church to expect a chariot ride to glory because we raised our hands once at camp. I see a crack and I refuse to paint it over.

Conclusion:

I'm going to end this morning by telling you a few things I believe to be true, you can take it or leave it. First of all, I believe that not everyone who comes to Jesus in this place will be saved. Not every balloon up there will likely enter the kingdom of heaven. As a result of that I believe we need to work VERY HARD to establish new believers in their faith. We need to DIG DEEP, we need to ATTACK ADDICTIONS, we need to PRAY VIGOROUSLY and we need to TEACH THE WORD AND THE WAYS of Jesus. Secondly, I believe that many professing Christians will fall away because their faith is no faith. I believe that many churches will be completely washed away because they are not built on the ROCK they are built on the personality of the leader, the tradition of the grandparents, the quality of the stage presentation or the lowness of the standard. And third, I believe that a storm is coming. I'm not chicken little and I don't run around saying that the sky is falling but I know a storm is coming. I know it because I've read the Word and I've studied history and whenever God's people get dirty he sends a flood. I don't think we've ever been this dirty so I think a storm is coming. I think that makes it my job to ensure that you know the truth, I think that makes it ALL OF OUR JOBS to quickly come alongside these many, many new converts God has blessed us with and collectively bulldoze away all the garbage, all the addiction, all the bondages that obscure the bed rock. I

think that makes it our job to make sure that their house and this house rest upon the firm foundation of Jesus Christ and his Word alone. And all God's people said, amen.