**Family Service Talk 14th January 2024**

**Luke 6:46-49**

***6“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? 47As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. 48They are 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. 49But 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.”***

In our Family Service we continue the series on ‘sitting with Jesus’ and our reading this morning comes at the end of a long sermon - the sermon on the plain. This is a shorter version of the sermon on the mount seen in Matthew. They may be a record of the same occasion but with Matthew having added some of Jesus’ other teaching or they may be different but similar occasions. Whichever is correct, it was a long sermon so the people might have been starting to wriggle a little and fidget around …. just as we might do at the end of a long lesson in school or a long flight or bus journey or even a long sermon in church! Sometimes it is hard to sit still and concentrate, isn’t it?!

**But** …. there are things that can make it easier …. Perhaps some pictures or maybe a little demonstration or even a video clip. In Jesus’ time and situation however, none of those helpful visual aids would have been possible or even available. But … Jesus did the next best thing – he painted a word picture to help people understand and to retain / regain their attention. He may even have picked up a rock as an illustration or run some sand through his fingers *(DO BOTH)* as he spoke, sitting on the ground surrounded by a large crowd of people.

The crowd included his disciples but many had come from Jerusalem and other parts of Judea and even as far as the Mediterranean coast. They had heard about Jesus and wanted to hear his teaching or to be healed from their diseases. Everyone wanted to be near Jesus …. the miracle worker who had such power and spoke with such authority.

And as Jesus spoke, he taught those listening about God’s kingdom and so many things about the very best way to live if they wanted to follow him and be a part of God’s kingdom. In the verses just before those that Nancy read, Jesus talked about loving our enemies and what that looked like; he cautioned people against criticising others when there would inevitably be many things that they would get wrong too …. and he spoke of forgiving people for the wrong they did …. all really challenging commands!

Following Jesus was clearly going to mean great changes in they way they lived for many people. It was not enough just to know about Jesus, listen to what he said and say you liked it. Jesus made it very clear that their lives should show their desire to be like Jesus and live his way.

But as he drew to the end of his long sermon – just as people **were** beginning to wriggle and fidget and think about what they would have for supper or how they were going to get home (there were no taxis or Ubers in first century Capernauum), Jesus started to talk about building houses!!

It must have seemed to some that he had finished his teaching points and was just making conversation, chatting about housing disasters that he had known! What could this possibly have to do with living for Jesus or following him? Maybe the followers of Jesus had to have a certain style of house … or they could only live in a certain area. The change of topic certainly would have woken up anyone who had dozed off or refocussed anyone whose mind had wondered off!

But actually, the first verse of our reading gives us a clue as to what Jesus was doing…… He was speaking to those who called him Lord. In other words, those people who recognised him as being someone powerful and important; those who had listened to all that he said; those who had maybe been healed by Jesus. However, Jesus knew that many of the people who called him Lord did not take any notice of what he said, they just carried on living their life as they always had. And so, he likened them to a house built on sand – they would be ok when everything was going well but as soon as life became tough and difficult, there would be nothing to hold them up and strengthen them, so they would collapse and not be able to cope - just like a house built on sand when a storm comes. *(ACTION)*

Jesus compared these people with those whose lives **had** changed as a result of knowing Jesus. They had come to listen, heard his teaching and then done what Jesus said they should do – their lives had visibly changed. These people Jesus likened to a house built on rock – even when life became tough and difficult, following Jesus and doing things his way would hold them up and keep them strong, they would cope – just like a house built on a rock when a storm comes

It must have been such a helpful picture for those listening but also presented a real challenge at the end of the sermon. To each and every person sitting and listening on the plain that day, Jesus was saying …. ‘Has your life changed as a result of what you have heard and seen?’ It was clearly not enough to listen to the sermon, like what you heard and call Jesus, Lord. There had to be evidence of a changed way of living as a result of what they had seen and heard. Were they genuinely trying to obey Jesus’ teaching and follow in his footsteps? Only then would they have a solid foundation for life – just like the solid foundation of a rock under a house.

And these questions of Jesus to the crowd nearly 2000 years ago are questions he asks of us today. We come to church to worship God … we call him Lord … we sing hymns and pray … we read the Bible … we go to Bible study groups … but does what we have read and heard change our lives as we live in obedience to what God says to us? Do we live lives that show a foundation of Jesus’ life and teaching?

Maybe we have only just heard about Jesus and are not really sure what difference he ought to make in our life. What does obedience to his teaching look like? What do we have to do in order to change? *(If this is you, please do ask someone here before you leave – we would love to help you)*

The great news is that Jesus **wants** us to know him, follow his teaching and obey his commands because he knows that will bring us all that is best for us in life. The even better news is that if we choose to follow Jesus, God’s Spirit will live in us and will **help** us to obey Jesus’ commands … and we will certainly all need that help! This trust and obedience will then give us the safe and secure foundation we all yearn for. The very best news is that our safe and secure foundation is based on the only place ever that is **100% reliable….** Trust in God who ~ created the world ~ loves us so much he sent his son Jesus to die as punishment for our wrongs ~ wants to be our friend ~ wants to bless us mightily.

The rock that is trust in and obedience to Jesus is all we need in calm times and in the storms of life. Why not affirm / re-affirm your trust in him today and commit / re-commit (with the Spirit’s help) to living a life of obedience to him? Amen