# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Strength in the Storm”**

**Matthew 7:24-27**

 **November 8, 2020**

Has this past week felt to you like you’re living in a storm? Political winds are buffeting you from one side while rising COVID numbers are assailing you from the other. Perhaps the driving rain of bad health news or conflict in a relationship have been beating on you. Storms are an inevitable part of human life, and Christians are no less subject to them than are non-believers. Jesus experienced plenty of storms in his life here on earth, as did the people among whom he daily ministered. His response to this reality was not to promise an end to storms in this world; rather, he showed us how to stand strong in the midst of the storm. I invite you to turn with me to Matthew 7:24-27

“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

Jesus uses an important physical-world reality to teach an important spiritual-world reality. In the physical world, if you want your house to stand, you need to build it on solid rock. If you don’t, it will eventually collapse. In Palestine, houses were built during the dry season when not a drop of rain fell. Simply building your house on top of the sand seemed safe. Besides, it was a lot less trouble than having to dig down through the sand until you hit bedrock. The problem was that when the dry season ended and the rainy season began, flash flooding would destroy the house built on sand. So, a wise person was the one who looked ahead to what was to come and built accordingly. And, a foolish person was the one who ignored the coming storm and took the easy way out.

How will we as Christ-followers be able to stand when the storms come? By living each day according to Jesus’ teaching. The past three Sundays we have looked at Jesus’ teaching in Matthew chapter 6 where he shows us the consequences of worry. Worry, he told us, comes from focusing more on the things of this world than the things of God. The things of this world are not necessarily wrong, in and of themselves, but when we begin to covet them and focus our energies on trying to accumulate them, then we begin to worry about them – to worry about losing them or what to do when they no longer satisfy us. Instead, trust your heavenly Father who knows what you need and is glad to provide it for you.

When you and I put Jesus’ words into action, when we take what we have and offer it freely to God to use for his Kingdom rather than to build up our own personal kingdoms, then we begin to live with less worry about what we have. We see how God uses our resources to further his priorities, and we see how he, at the same time, is taking care of our needs. And, as we learn to trust God more for what we need and worry less about what we have, we will also begin to trust God more for other things in our lives like our health, and national politics, and relationships. To trust more and worry less gets applied to all of life, and when the storms come we are able to stand because we trust in the God who makes us able to stand. “He’s got the whole world in his hands” is not just a nice song. It is bedrock biblical truth. There is nothing in my life or in your life or in world’s life that has somehow been taken out of his hands and is now subject to chance or fate or luck. No matter how chaotic our lives or the world may seem, no matter how strong the storms that threaten to bring us down with a “mighty crash,” if our foundation is in hearing and following Jesus Christ, we will stand.

When I was preparing to graduate from college with my degree in Chemical Engineering, I was ready to accept the offer of a high-paying job. Then, the church where Lauri and I were volunteering as youth leaders approached us and asked if I would consider taking the recently vacated Junior High Minister position. The salary they offered was about half of what the engineering job was paying. Lauri and I had been married less than a year and we had little money. We had recently learned that we were pregnant with Ryan and knew that would mean increased living expenses. As we talked and prayed about it, and sought the advice of others who, like us, were seeking to follow Christ, we sensed God’s clear guidance to accept the church job and to trust him for our financial needs. Now, almost 40 years later, God has not let us down. He blessed us in so many ways through that position at the church, and we have never lacked financially. We have not always been able to afford what we want, but we have never been in need. And, best of all, we have learned that trusting God will never let us down.