# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Living Wisely”**

**Matthew 7:24-27**

 **May 21, 2023**

We have been exploring Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount on how to live according to the will of God. Jesus’ teaching style throughout the Gospels was to take something familiar from ordinary life and use it to clarify life in God’s kingdom. In this morning’s text, Jesus uses home building to show us how to live wisely. 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.”

To build a house wisely is to build it with rain and floodwaters and wind in mind. Likewise, to build our Christian lives wisely is to build them in such a way that they can withstand the emotional, psychological and spiritual storms we encounter in this world. Foolish building, which does not take these storms into account, is easier. You can do it faster for there is no need to dig down to bedrock, no need to obey Jesus’ teaching, but it will not stand.

When life is easy, it seems good enough just to listen to all the good teachings of Jesus and agree with them in our mind. “Love your neighbor.” Yes, Lord, I agree. “Care for those in need.” Absolutely, Jesus, we should all do that. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” What wonderful words, Jesus. But to agree with Jesus is not the same as going out and doing these things. Will I actually do God’s will in my life, or will I tell him that I can handle my own life? The problem with taking charge of how we live our life is that if we don’t do God’s will when things are going well for us, we will not be strong when the storms of life come upon us. Our faith will not stand.

In Mark’s Gospel we find the story of Jesus and his disciples getting into a boat to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Everything is going along smoothly for the disciples. They’re hanging out with Jesus, it’s a nice day, and they’re looking forward to some good teaching from Jesus once they get to the other side, maybe even a miracle. Then, a fierce storm arises, and the waves begin to break into the boat until it’s in danger of swamping. Frantically they try to save themselves, but the situation continues to worsen. Finally, they go to Jesus, who is sleeping in the back of the boat, and shout, “Teacher, don’t you even care that we are going to drown.” Who in this boat is ready for the storm?

Jesus gets up and tells the storm to quiet down. Immediately the wind stops, the waves calm, and the danger is past. Then he turns to his disciples and says, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still not have faith in me?” When storms come our way, will our faith be strong enough to stand?

Last Sunday was Mother’s Day. Twenty-eight years ago, the last conversation I had with my mother before her unexpected death was on Mother’s Day. As I have shared with you before, I was living in Austin at the time and I called her back in Colorado to wish her a happy Mother’s Day. We talked about a lot of things but mostly about her favorite subject: her three grandsons. As the call was coming to an end I told her that I loved her. She said that she loved me, too. Two days later, as a result of routine knee surgery, a blood clot developed, traveled to her lung and killed her.

I spent a lot of time over the following days and weeks thinking not only about my mom but also about God and my relationship with him. I realized, somewhat to my surprise, that I wasn’t angry with God. I certainly wasn’t happy about my mother’s death, but there was something in me that was deeper than my sorrow. It was the assurance that if God had chosen this time to take my mother home to be with him in heaven for eternity, then it was a good thing. I also came to realize that the reason I was responding to my mother’s death in this way was in large part because of her. She not only professed Jesus, but she lived her life doing what Jesus asked of her. And she had showed me how to do the same. Whether things were going well for her and her family, or if we were going through a difficult time, I never saw her forsake her faith in God’s goodness. It stood strong.

She taught me that God is good, even when things around us are bad. She encouraged me to trust in God and assured me that I could always count on God. She told me that heaven was real and that it is much, much better there than even the best we have here on earth. And, I came to believe it and to practice it. First, because as a child I wanted to please my mother and later because I knew in my heart that it was true. She helped me to build a strong foundation for my life, a life built on faith in Jesus.

We all experience storms in our lives. When they come, they will help us discover whether the foundation of our faith has been built on obedience to Jesus’ teaching, or if we have been listening but not putting his words into practice. Obedience to Jesus is not easy, but it is worth the effort. If you find your faith weak in your storm, if you think Jesus may be asking of you, “Where is your faith?” remember the disciples in their boat. That day their faith failed them, but they learned from their failure and went on to build the strong faith foundation of doing what their master taught them. You and I can do the same.